



ISSUE 31

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## The Quarterly Newsletter of the Snell Memorial Foundation

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This is the thirty first of the Foundation's quarterly newsletters to the helmet manufacturing industry. The twenty-ninth was sent out last August. Comments and items for inclusion in subsequent issues are invited.

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### Manufacturers' Meeting

The annual manufacturers meeting took place February the day before the opening of the PowerSports Expo in Indianapolis, Indiana. Dr. Fenner, Hong Zhang, Randy McCarty and Ed Becker represented the Foundation. Topics discussed included the January ICMS-FIA meeting in Miami, the ISO head protection subcommittee meeting in Orlando two weeks later, the FIA super helmet and motorsports headgear for younger children.



## ICMS-FIA

There was a joint meeting of the International Council for Motorsports Safety and the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile in Miami in mid-January. The medical and engineering experts that make up much of the membership of these two organizations deal with the full range of safety issues confronting modern racing.

Helmets issues are only a small part of their concerns. Even so John Deagan was there to discuss his "Hats Off" helmet removal system, a marvelously simple mechanism intended to minimize subsequent injuries to crash victims. Robert Hubbard and Vince Tidwell displayed a helmet featuring new tether anchoring for the HANS device. Andrew Mellor of TRL gave a presentation on the TRL super helmet that is the basis for the crash helmet standard proposals TRL has formulated for FIA. Mellor brought along a helmet sample for review and announced that he expected to bring samples to the Snell laboratory in California for certification testing to SA2000 soon.

## ISO TC94/SC1 Meeting

There was a meeting of the ISO subcommittee for head protection at the end of January in Orlando, FL. This subcommittee is responsible for ISO standards for helmet test headforms and methods as well as industrial, sports and road use helmets. However, the subcommittee had not met for many years.

Fortunately, ISEA, the International Safety Equipment Association, has been assigned responsibility for the organization of meetings and for the United States Technical Advisory Group (TAG) that will represent US interests on the committee. ISEA's primary interest is in industrial applications but their leadership may stimulate renewed action across the broad front of head protection interests.

Participation in ISO standards development may be a way for non-Europeans to influence CEN standards which apply to goods sold throughout the common market countries. These CEN standards replace the national standards that, at one time, greatly complicated trade throughout Europe. When the drafting began on these CEN standards, it was agreed that the corresponding ISO standards would be applied where ever possible.

The meeting was well attended. There were many from the U.S. but the United Kingdom, Sweden, Turkey and Japan were also represented. After some initial discussion on the political makeup of the ISO structures and the implications of same, the attendees divided the general standards writing tasks into a short list of efforts and voted to establish corresponding working groups to deal with them.

This ISO process may lead to uniform test methods and equipment and, eventually, to international standards for helmets. However, from the outset it will provide a forum for the discussion of testing issues such as injury mechanisms, helmet performance, test devices, headform weights, test criteria, and so on. International standards may not be a reality for many years but the process may begin to enrich and inform standards development here and elsewhere very quickly.

## Children's Motorsports Headgear

During the recent manufacturers meeting, Doctor Fenner described the current Snell quandary over standards for children's motorsports helmets. Although many children have hat sizes in the adult range, they may not have the muscle strength to support adult helmets, particularly Snell certified adult motorcycle, karting and auto racing helmets. The concern is not that an overly heavy helmet will increase the risk of injury in a crash but that the child wearing one will not be able to maintain adequate control of his vehicle to avoid crashes. Lighter headgear for children seem a reasonable solution but lighter helmets must certainly be less protective.

The principal questions are: what is a reasonable upper bound for the weight of a child's helmet? What is the upper limit on protective capability this weight limit implies? At what point in the paring away of weight and protective capability should the Foundation cease recommending headgear and advise against children's motorsports, at least until the child grows stronger. Right now, no one seems to have any answers.

## DOT Revision



The revision to the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 218 appears to be stalled. An announcement had seemed imminent since late 1998 but no one now seems willing or able to make any projections.

The DOT Motorcycle Helmet Standard is a mandatory minimum for headgear sold for motorcycle use throughout the United States. It is specified in most U.S. jurisdictions where motorcycle helmet use is required. Recently, Canada also requires that motorcyclists wear either DOT or Snell certified motorcycle helmets.

**I**t has been twenty-eight years since FMVSS 218 was first put into effect, plenty of time to discover its shortcomings and consider improvements. The directors and staff here at the Foundation are ready with suggestions and, it's a certainty, so are a lot of others.

**A**long with riders and traffic authorities throughout North America, and manufacturers and technical and medical experts throughout the world, we await the first draft of the new, improved FMVSS 218. It will be the opening gun in what should be a lively series of rounds of public comment and re-drafts. Lets hope that every aspect of the standard and its administration will be up for discussion and that it will be soon.

## RS-98 Ski Helmet Brochure



**T**he Snell Safety Education Center has prepared a new four color, four page brochure discussing the importance of appropriate crash helmets for recreational skiing and snowboarding. This item explains, in a few sets of bullets and simple diagrams, the function and benefits of wintersports crash helmets and the operation of the Snell RS-98 Certification program. It is intended for use in winter sports safety training as well as a point of sales promotional item to persuade winter sports enthusiasts of the value of headgear when they are most receptive; that is, when they are actually shopping for ski and snowboard clothing and equipment.

**C**opies of the brochure may be ordered on-line through the Foundation's web site. There is no charge but your tax deductible donations to the Snell Safety Education Center will help us continue this effort and will be gratefully received.

**T**he Center will also distribute copies of the new brochure from the Foundation's booth at the February SIA Show in Las Vegas. Hong Zhang and Gib Brown will be on hand to discuss Snell's role in wintersports safety and to get valuable feedback from industry professionals. Manufacturers, retailers, distributors and other interested parties are invited to stop by for a visit.

## Enlightened Marketing

**M**s. Hong Zhang, the Foundation's Director of Education, addressed the manufacturers meeting briefly to discuss a subject that rarely comes up in the Snell laboratory: how to get Snell certified headgear onto peoples' heads. But the Foundation is dedicated not just to the development and manufacture of superior headgear but also to their use. If motorcyclists aren't seeking out, buying and wearing good helmets, there's little point to building them and even less to testing and certifying them.

**M**s. Zhang develops much of the helmet promotional materials that Snell distributes to dealers, distributors, and safety groups. The message is simple and straightforward. Helmets are one of many tools for reducing the hazards of motorcycling. Motorcycle safety is not a matter of choosing one of these tools but of using all of them.

**H**ong's suggestion to helmet manufacturers is that they cultivate relationships with organizations promoting licensing, ridership training and general motorcycle safety. In the last few years, these organizations have encountered a flood of new and returning riders and are straining to provide services and, particularly, instructional courses to them. Many new riders consider the course work so important that they put off purchasing bikes and other gear until classes become available.

**F**or the past few years, increasing demand for these courses has outrun the resources of all the providing organizations. They need more instructors, more indoor and outdoor spaces, more materials and more equipment. Unfortunately, no one will get rich trying to satisfy this demand. If it were otherwise, market forces would have solved the problem already. Instead, it has fallen to groups like the State Motorcycle Safety Administrators to beg, borrow and creatively appropriate the necessary resources and to the cadres of accomplished riders who serve as instructors for little more reward than their love of motorcycling.

**A**n enlightened rationale for any company to contribute to this effort is that the organizations, the instructors and especially, the new riders they are training are good for the sport. However, it is also worth pointing out that these new riders want and can afford top drawer equipment and they look to the courses and instructors for guidance. You could not ask for better product placement than by making your gear available to the instructors and, as loaners, to the students in these ridership courses.

Contact information for the State Motorcycle Safety Administrators (SMSA) is:

7881 S. Wellington St.

Centennial, CO 80122-3193

Tel: (303) 797-2318

FAX: (303) 703-3569

e-mail [smsabusinessmgr@hotmail.com](mailto:smsabusinessmgr@hotmail.com)

The SMSA will be meeting this summer in Boise, Idaho, August 15-17.

## Helmet Designations

**T**he Foundation posts lists of current Snell certified headgear as a public service. These lists are organized by Snell standard, brand name, model name and consumer size. The brand and model names and the size designation are all up to the discretion of the manufacturer. Since tastes in names and in cosmetic decoration vary, many helmets appear in several different places on our lists. Unfortunately, these lists are often incomplete. The people picking the model names may not be talking to the quality assurance people who are our main sources of information.

**W**hen we do our follow on testing, we look for any helmet with a Snell sticker. Just because a helmet is not on our lists does not mean it falls off the radar altogether. If anything, those helmets are scrutinized more closely and tested more frequently than others. Instead, helmets not on our lists are just a little less visible to consumers. Helmet buyers often consult our lists before they go shopping and may not even consider other model names. Others check our lists after they buy. Some check with us to be sure they haven't been cheated and, I'm certain, many more go back to the dealer demanding to know why Snell hasn't heard of this headgear.

**S**o manufacturers, give your customers a break. Keep us up to date with your model names. When you send samples in for certification testing, include all the names and size designations you intend to use to sell them. If your plans change later, let us know. The information we need is simply this:

**Sold as:**

Brand Name (or Manufacturer)

Model

Size(s)

**Certified as:**

Manufacturer

Model

Size

Snell Test #

**W**e'll update our lists accordingly and confirm with you in writing. By the same token, if you discontinue a model, let us know that as well. We will remove the model from our lists after a suitable delay to allow existing product to be sold.

**Who to Contact at Snell**  
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