



ISSUE 32

June 14, 2002

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## The Quarterly Newsletter of the Snell Memorial Foundation

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

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### **New Bank Information**

For those of you who make invoice payments by wire transfer to the Snell accounts please update your records as follows:

***JP Morgan Private Bank***

***500 Stanton Christiana Road***

***Newark, DE 19713***

***ABA Number: \*\*\*\*\* Contact Foundation***

***Account Number: \*\*\*\*\* Contact Foundation***

***Telephone: 302-634-5637 Fax: 302-634-5150***

Please be sure to use these numbers for all wire transfers to the Foundation. JP Morgan will not be able to correctly direct payments made with the old information.

On all payments you must reference the invoice numbers to insure proper credit to your account. All invoices paid by check should continue to be sent to our accounting department, P.O. Box 2203, Odessa, Texas, 79760-2203.

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.

## **Pit Crew Headgear**

Pit row can be a dangerous place. Crews and race officials have been wearing a wide variety of headgear for some time but, recently, a concerted effort has gotten underway to develop a special purpose helmet tailored to the needs of those who go over the wall.

Some of the desirable capabilities for a crew helmet are additional peripheral vision, noise reduction, and increased rigidity. The optimal helmet will be similar to current racing headgear but there will be distinct differences. These crew helmets will not be big sellers and may never pay back their development costs but a few manufacturers have already come forward with prototypes.

The Foundation is working with race organizers and officials, manufacturers and other interested individuals to develop appropriate tests and standards for crew helmets.

## **Abbreviated Testing**

The Snell laboratory will no longer terminate certification testing after an early failure in order to charge reduced test fees. The lab personnel have pointed out that a substantial portion of the effort has been completed before the impact testing ever starts. If a manufacturer suspects his certification samples will fail, he should go back to the drawing board.

**M**anufacturers requiring developmental testing can request our prototype test services. We will test the helmet according to the manufacturer's specific instructions and provide as complete a test report as we can within our competence. However, we will not use these prototype results to evaluate a helmet for certification. There, we require a full set of samples and we select the test conditions and configurations.

**W**e're professionally obliged to doubt every helmet model submitted for certification but there should be no doubts back at the factory.



## **ICMS-FIA**

**T**here 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.

**H**elmet 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**

**T**here 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.

**F**ortunately, 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.

**P**articipation 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.

It 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.

Along 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.



The National Association of State Motorcycle Safety Administrators (SMSA) will be meeting in Boise, Idaho, August 15-17, 2002. The membership of this organization is engaged in organizing and conducting classes in ridership training in most of these United States. The summer meeting is attended by the officers of this group but also by the rank and file instructors, many of whom bike in from great distances. Contact information for the SMSA is:

**SMSA**  
**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)**  
**web: [www.smsa.org](http://www.smsa.org)**

It's been estimated that for novice riders, a ridership training course is the equivalent of six months' but in the saddle motorcycle experience. Since the first six months in a rider's career are the most dangerous, there are waiting lists for these courses. Not only are people willing to work through the classes and field exercises, many are putting off purchases of bikes and equipment until they've learned what gear to buy.

There are few, if any, wealthy ridership training instructors. Most have regular jobs and teach in their spare time for little more reward than their love of the sport. To assist in this worthwhile effort, some enlightened businesses have made donations directly to SMSA, provided motorcycle accessories for door prizes at the summer meetings and set up steep discount programs for the instructors. Other, harder nosed businessmen provide door prizes and set up discount programs in order to get their gear onto the instructors and out in front of classrooms full of novices. Impressionable novices, I might add, with lots of disposable income and desperate for advice on how to spend it.

## Helmet Designations

The 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.

Then 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.

So 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 (or Manufacturer)**

**Model**

**Size(s)**

**Certified as:**

**Manufacturer**

**Model**

**Size**

**Snell Test #**

We'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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