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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Snell Memorial Foundation

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

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Manufacturers' Meeting

The next Snell Certified Manufacturers' meeting will be held February 18, 2000, in Indianapolis in conjunction with the PowerSports Expo.

Dr. Fenner, the president of the Foundation's board of directors will conduct the meeting and will be available for discussion afterward through the 19th. Randy McCarty and Ed Becker, will also attend the meeting and will be available throughout the Expo at the Snell display in booth 3308, Zone 8.

M2000/SA2000 Label Release

One of the anticipated topics of discussion at the manufacturers' meeting will be the implementation policy for the new M and SA standards and, particularly, the first shipments of M2000 and SA2000 labels.

Australia Adds Snell B-95

The Commonwealth of Australia recently enacted legislation that opens Australian markets to bicycle helmets certified to Snell B-95. This action should greatly simplify the compliance burdens of all Snell certified manufacturers bringing bicycle helmets into Australia.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Standards Australia, Quality Assurance Services and all the other members of the Australian safety community. We are confident that this partnership will increase the range of effective, low-cost bicycle helmets available to the Australian cycling public.

B-95 Standards to Continue

The Foundation's directors have reviewed the current status of bicycle helmets and have decided to continue the current B-95 programs. Plans to issue a B2000 standard have been tabled. The directors may revisit this matter but, for the foreseeable future, B-95 will remain the Foundation's most stringent bicycle helmet standard and program.

B-95 had been revised in the last two years to simplify compliance with the Consumer Product Safety Commission Bicycle Helmet Safety Standard. B-95 now specifies requirements for two classes of bicycle helmet: those for persons age 5 and older (B95A) and those for younger children and toddlers (B95C). Certification in either of these B-95 programs demonstrates compliance with the corresponding CPSC classification.

The Foundation and the industry have just finished consolidating these revisions and requalifying existing headgear. Given the magnitude of this effort and the significant advance that B-95 represents over other helmet standards, the directors concluded that no substantial changes are justified at this time.

Manufacturer Visits

We encourage all manufacturers to visit the laboratory and to observe their products being tested. The test techs will administer the same tests and obtain the same results but they will endeavor to explain and to demonstrate Snell procedures and also to discuss test results.

We will do our best to discuss any aspect of the test results and their implications but, please remember, our expertise is confined to Snell type test procedures and equipment. Any opinion we may offer concerning helmet materials and design is personal conjecture and may not have the support of either the Foundation or our colleagues.

We believe the real value of these visits is a deeper understanding of our methods and equipment than might be had from our Standards booklets. Armed with this deeper understanding, manufacturers will be better able to develop helmets to our Standards and to maintain helmet quality throughout production.

Under the auspices of the Snell Safety Education Center, we also conduct tours of our facility for schools and community organizations. These tours generally consist of a discussion of the Foundation and its programs and then a demonstration of testing on anonymous helmet samples.

M2000 & SA2000 Programs

Although we have been performing certification testing to M2000 and SA2000 for several months, these standards will not officially take effect till later this year. Helmet models that meet the '2000 requirements are granted '95 certification and will receive the M2000 or SA2000 certification as appropriate as soon as the new standards become official.

Once the new standards take effect, we will stop shipment of the M-95 and SA-95 labels. Manufacturers may continue to use existing stocks of the '95 labels in their Certified helmets until March of 2001.

The release date for the M2000 and SA2000 certification labels was to coincide with the date the standards take effect. However, the directors will consider earlier release dates as necessary to make labels available for the beginning of the year 2001 production cycle. Please see the item "M2000/SA2000 Label Release" on page 1 of this issue.

DOT Revision

The "Notice of Proposed Rule Making" introducing revisions to Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 218 is now expected this spring. FMVSS 218, also known as the DOT motorcycle helmet standard, has set the minimum adequate requirements for US street motorcycle helmets since the early 1970's. Except for a few procedural refinements, this standard is essentially the same as it was when it was first adapted from its ANSI Z90.1-1971 predecessor.



Notice of this first real overhaul of the DOT Standard has been awaited momentarily ever since 1997. When the notice appears in the Federal Register, it will invite comments on the draft rule making from interested parties. These comments will be reviewed and considered in the formulation of a Final Rule which might appear by the end of 2000 and take effect in 2001.

We will attempt to monitor developments in this matter through notices posted on the DOT, Federal Record and Commerce Business Daily web sites.

Pretest Information Forms

When submitting helmet samples for testing, it is essential that a properly filled in 'pretest information form' accompany them. We receive a lot of helmets from a lot of manufacturers. Without some guidance, we may not know model name, size, manufacturer or the type of testing necessary.

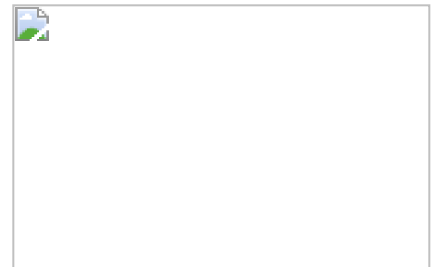
Samples that arrive without documentation are likely to sit unprocessed. A telephone call in advance of shipping is welcome but please do not rely on the fragile memories of our office staff. The surest way to obtain proper and timely test results is to provide paperwork with all the necessary information with the shipment. When the samples arrive with the proper documents, proper receiving, logging, labeling scheduling and testing is virtually assured.

Blank forms and instructions for filling them out are available. Manufacturers are invited to modify and adapt them as necessary. The only essential is that we have sufficient information to perform and document the requested testing.

In particular, please double check the spelling of the model name, include all the sizes for which the helmet structure is intended, indicate the standard and test type and, finally the disposition of the tested samples. Although we recommend that manufacturers examine all failed samples in order to determine how best to improve their headgear, unless there is a specific request to return failed samples, they are routinely destroyed.

Snell Safety Education Center

The Snell Safety Education Center (SSEC) has taken on all the tasks associated with preparation and distribution of videos, posters, brochures and similar materials promoting the correct selection and use of appropriate protective headgear. These functions have always been seen as a necessary part of the Foundation's overall mission but, in recent years, had created a considerable strain on our structure and resources.



SSEC, by virtue of its flexibility and charter, has the capabilities to perform these functions and to cooperate closely with other organizations of similar interests. Currently, the Center is working with the University of California, Davis, in a program promoting child safety across a broad front in the Sacramento area.

The Center is organized under Federal 501C3 regulations and is separate and distinct from the Foundation. The Center's president, Ms. Hong Zhang, welcomes inquiries and requests for assistance from community and national safety organizations.

Replacing Your Helmet

by: **Ed Hunter**

How often should you replace your helmet?

You know that smelly old thing that you have been wearing for years. Just got comfortable, didn't it.

First some background: I work for the SNELL MEMORIAL FOUNDATION as a Lab Technician testing helmets. This means I have some knowledge about helmet testing and standards, plus access to helmet test equipment.

For years now when people find out where I work, one of the first questions asked is "how long do helmets last"? In an attempt to answer the question, I asked my riding friends to give me their old helmets for testing. The procedure used was to identify each helmet's original test standard because it would be unreasonable to expect a helmet certified in 1970 to withstand the impacts required by the 2000 standard. For SNELL certified helmets this was easy. Each certified helmet contains a sticker indicating the standard. For non certified helmets, I used the standard that was in effect at the time of manufacture. Although there are other helmet standards in the world, I tested all helmets to the applicable SNELL standard. The helmets were rigorously tested, but the exercise was informal because there was no control group of helmets and no attempt to ascertain the treatment each helmet had received over the years. Since 1996, I tested 26 different helmets representing 8 different manufacturers. The oldest helmet was certified to the SNELL 1962 standard and the newest had a 1990 SNELL sticker.

What!

You want to know the results of all this testing?

Over half of the helmets were able to pass the test prescribed by the original standard.

No, I will not identify those that passed or failed.

What does it all mean? I think it means that the recommendation of many manufacturers to replace your helmet every five years is as good as any. I believe helmets left in the box, on the shelf will last a long, long time. Of course, they won't provide you much protection while you're out riding and they're setting on the shelf. There are at least three things to keep in mind when considering whether to purchase a new helmet; one, how has the helmet been treated; two, how far have the standards advanced; and three, how does it smell.

Ed Hunter is an experienced test technician as well as an avid motorcyclist. He tests every helmet as if he were making up his mind whether to buy one for himself. Ed Becker

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