

## Helmets.

– Author: Bill Gregory

Everyone needs to have a helmet to participate in drivers education. For most drivers education, the helmet must be rated by the Snell Foundation as SA-90 (helmet for auto racing plus the year of the rating) or higher (there will be a sticker in the helmet). In addition to the SA standard for auto racing, there is the M standard is for motorcycles (M-rated helmets are not valid for CVR events). Since you asked, the differences between the two standards are that SA-rated helmets undergo a flammability test, have a narrower field of vision than M-rated helmets, and have a rollbar impact test. New helmets bought before roughly October 2000 will have the current Snell SA-95 rating, and after that they will be Snell SA2000. Both the Snell Foundation and helmet manufacturers recommend that you replace your helmet every five years, as out gassing of glues can dissolve liner material, general liner deterioration can occur due to hair oils/sweat, and there's normal "wear and tear". If you smack the helmet against something, as in an accident, make sure you have it inspected or send it to the manufacturer to ensure it's safety wasn't compromised by the hit.

There are several manufacturers of helmets, with some of the major ones being Bell, Simpson, Arai, and Shoei, and each have several lines of helmets. One of the considerations is whether you want an open face or full face helmet. The full face helmet has coverage around your mouth/jaw area, and is recommended over an open face helmet due to it's added protection. (you won't see any open faced helmets in professional formula racing). If you wear glasses, take a look at the Bell M2, as it has a larger eyeport, making glasses on/off easier. You have a choice of materials in fiberglass (less expensive) or kevlar (more expensive, lighter), which both meet the same safety standards. Try to go somewhere to try on helmets (as opposed to mail order), even if you have to drive a couple of hours, as they all fit differently. I tried three brands of helmets when I bought mine: one was uncomfortable, one I got on and nearly didn't get off, and one fit just right. And the seller can help ensure that, comfort aside, the helmet fits correctly. Expect to pay \$250 - \$350 for a fiberglass helmet. Also, buy new, not used, unless you positively know that the helmet was never dropped/smacked or involved in an accident.

With helmet in hand, you should also buy a helmet support, which runs \$25-\$60. These are typically foam covered in nomex material, and sit on your shoulder under the helmet. The helmet support limits how far your head-with-helmet can move in the event of an accident (called hyperextension), and provides some support while you're driving.

Written by Bill Gregory for the "Challenge", monthly publication of the Connecticut Valley Region, Porsche Club of America.