

How to Identify Unapproved Motorcycle Helmets



N.S.S. 39:3-76.7

Motorcycle Helmets Save Lives. The U.S. DOT requires that all motorcycle helmets sold in the U.S. meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 218, which defines minimum levels of performance that helmets must meet to help protect the head and brain in the event of a crash. New Jersey Law (39:3-76.7) mandates the use of helmets that meet FMVSS 218 requirements. Many unapproved helmets are sold as novelty items and circumvent FMVSS 218's requirements. Some motorcyclists use these helmets in the mistaken belief that they offer protection. Others know they are unapproved but wear them anyway. Here's how to distinguish unapproved helmets from those that meet the Federal Safety Standard:

Design & Style of Helmet

Approved helmets generally come in three basic styles: Full Face, Open Face, and Half Shell. Unapproved helmets appear similar to the half shell style helmet, although some half shell style helmets may meet Federal requirements. The DOT safety standard does not allow anything to extend further than 2/10" from the surface of a helmet. While visor fasteners are allowed, a spike or other protruding decoration indicates an unapproved helmet.



FULL FACE



OPEN FACE



HALF SHELL

Weight

Unapproved helmets usually weigh one pound or less. Helmets meeting FMVSS 218 generally weigh about three pounds depending on design. These helmets provide a more substantial feel and appearance.



Approved



Unapproved

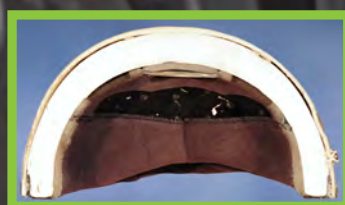


Thick Inner Liner

Helmets meeting the minimum Federal safety standards have an inner liner usually about one-inch thick of firm polystyrene foam. Sometimes the inner liner is not visible, but you should still be able to feel its thickness. Unapproved helmets normally contain only soft foam padding or a bare plastic shell with no padding at all.



Approved



Unapproved

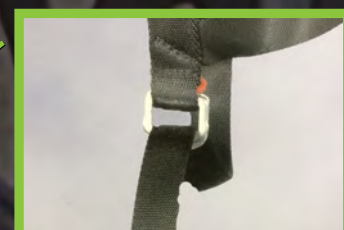


Sturdy Chinstrap

Helmets meeting the DOT safety standard have a sturdy chinstrap with a steel "D" ring or steel buckle, not a small plastic buckle found on bicycle helmets.



Approved



Unapproved

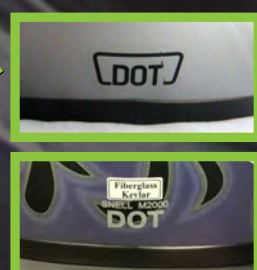


DOT Sticker

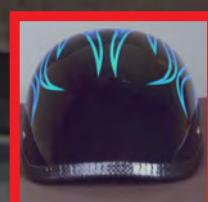
Helmets are manufactured with a sticker on the outside back of the helmet with the letters "DOT," which certifies that the helmet meets or exceeds FMVSS 218. DOT stickers are placed 1 1/8 - 1 3/8" from the bottom edge of the helmet. It is important to note that an approved helmet may no longer bear the DOT sticker if it has been removed or covered with a custom paint job. Counterfeit DOT stickers can be obtained for the purpose of applying them to unapproved helmets.



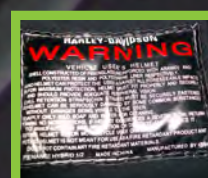
Approved



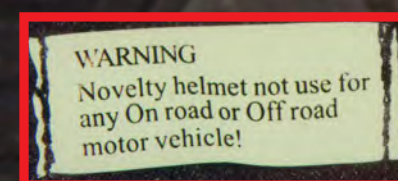
Unapproved



Approved



Unapproved



Manufacturer's Labeling

Manufacturer's name, model, size, month & year of manufacture, and construction materials may appear on or inside the helmet. A helmet that does not meet FMVSS 218 usually does not have such labeling. Unapproved helmets often have a label indicating that it is a novelty item and not intended for use as safety equipment.

For More Information, Contact the New Jersey State Police Fatal Accident Investigation Unit at: (609) 882-2000 ext. 2038