

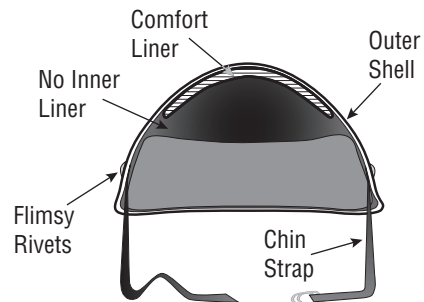
## Design/Style of Helmet

The DOT safety standard does not allow rigid protrusions to extend farther than one-fifth of an inch from the surface of a helmet unless required for operation of essential accessories. For example, while visor fasteners are allowed, a spike or other protruding decoration may indicate an unsafe helmet.

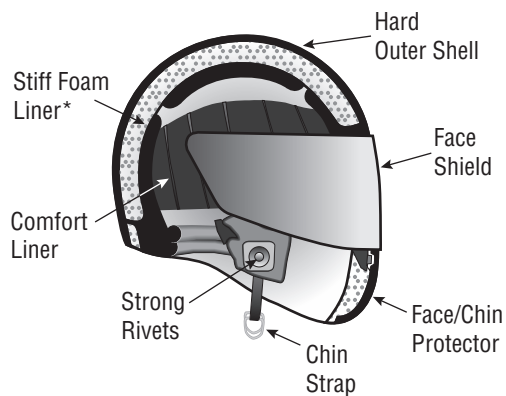
Safe helmets can come in styles ranging from partial to complete coverage. However, the more a helmet covers, the more protection it can provide.

DOT HS 807 880  
September 2019 (Revised)

### UNSAFE Helmet Interior



### SAFE Helmet Interior



\*Typically expanded polystyrene



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# How to Identify Unsafe Motorcycle Helmets



# How to Identify Unsafe Motorcycle Helmets

It's clear ... Motorcycle helmets save lives. To help protect the lives of motorcycle riders, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) requires that all motorcycle helmets sold in the United States meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 218. This standard defines minimum levels of performance that helmets must meet to protect the head and brain in a crash. Each year, DOT conducts compliance testing of a variety of motorcycle helmets to determine whether helmets being sold in the United States meet the Federal safety standard. Because helmets add such a critical margin of safety for motorcycle riders, many states now have laws requiring use of helmets that meet FMVSS No. 218 requirements. Some motorcycle riders are violating these state laws by wearing unsafe helmets that do not meet FMVSS No. 218. Most of these helmets are sold as novelty items and circumvent FMVSS No. 218's requirements. In some cases, motorcyclists purchase these helmets in the mistaken belief that they offer protection. However, many people who wear these novelty helmets know that they are unsafe – but wear them anyway. Here is how to identify unsafe novelty helmets and recognize those that meet the Federal safety standard.

## What to Check For

Check for weight, inner liner thickness, sturdy chinstraps, as well as the DOT certification label to assess if the helmet meets the Federal safety standard. Familiarize yourself with brand names and designs of helmets that comply with DOT requirements. For example, a full-face design is a good indicator of a safe helmet. To date, we have never seen a full-face style novelty helmet.

### *Weight of Helmet*

Depending on design, unsafe helmets can weigh only one pound or less. Helmets meeting FMVSS No. 218 generally weigh about three pounds. Become familiar with the weight of helmets that comply with the DOT safety standard. These helmets feel more substantial.

### *Inner Liner Thickness*

Helmets meeting the minimum Federal safety standard typically have an expanded polystyrene (stiff foam having the appearance of styrofoam) inner liner that is at least  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick. Sometimes the inner liner will not be visible, but you should still be able to feel its thickness. Unsafe motorcycle helmets may have an inner liner less than  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick, only a soft foam padding liner, or may lack an inner liner entirely.

### *Sturdy Chin Strap and Rivets*

Helmets meeting the DOT safety standard have sturdy chin straps with solid rivets.

## DOT Certification Label

Helmets that meet FMVSS No. 218 have certification labels on the back of the helmet. Helmets manufactured on or after May 13, 2013, are required to have the new DOT certification label:



## Manufacturer's Labeling

Manufacturers are required under FMVSS No. 218 to place a label on or inside the helmet stating the manufacturer's name, size, month and year of manufacture, and instructions to the purchaser which includes construction materials and warnings regarding the care and use of the helmet. A helmet that does not meet the Federal safety standard usually does not have such labeling. Remember that a DOT label on the back of the helmet and proper inside labeling do not necessarily indicate that a helmet meets all DOT requirements. Some helmets may have counterfeit DOT certification labels, and a limited few may also have manufacturer's labeling.

## Snell or ANSI Label

In addition to the DOT certification label, labels located inside the helmet showing that a helmet meets the standards of private, non-profit organizations such as SNELL or the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) are good indicators that the helmet also meets FMVSS No. 218.