



ROAR

December. 2024

Volume 24, Issue 12

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We Wish You and all of your Loved Ones the Best of Holidays and Warm Roads in the New Year

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Upcoming Events

DECEMBER

- 3 GENERAL MEETING
- 10 BOARD MEETING
- 31 NEW YEAR'S EVE!

JANUARY

- 7 GENERAL MEETING
- 14 BOARD MEETING

FEBRUARY

- 15 TC BANQUET

Talk to Greg Smith and get your ideas on the calendar!



The Official Publication
Of Top Cats Illinois



ROAR

PRESIDENT'S POINT

And Now a Word from your President...



Hello, Top Cats!

I hope your Thanksgiving was great and you got to spend quality time with your family and friends. The Rigsby's did... This is why I am Lucky.... This does not apply to the weather, as most of you know.... IYKYK

Speaking of weather.... Well.... It's here. I hope we can still find a day or two to get out on the road. Keep your eyes open, looking for blasts and checking the calendar. If not for rides, for other activities which will be announced soon. One item to get on your calendar right now, is the Top Cats annual awards banquet, which will be held on February 15, 2025 starting at 5:30 and being held at Emmett's in Palatine. Save the date now...

Activities from November...

Nov 23) Annual NISRA fashion show (Mary). As usual, the fashion show was a lot of fun. A few folks that had planned to attend did not make it unfortunately, but we pressed on. Our very own member, Daniella Maca won a Christmas tree this year. Congratulations to her.

Activities for December...

No events are scheduled for December at this time. Keep your eyes open for any opportunities to get together, be it a ride or other event. Do it!

Elections are happening at the December meeting. Please review the candidate list (sent in a recent blast) and vote for who you feel will provide the best benefit to our club. Keep in mind we need folks like you from the club, to step up as a volunteer to be a director or a committee member to keep our club legally compliant and viable in our community and for each other. Our club has a near 30 year history to be proud of, so be part of it now and in the future.

It has been a quite fall/winter.... STILL room on the calendar RCs... Let's get a few more rides or other activities together and let's go!

Don't need to be complex. **KISS**...

*****See the club's calendar for more details about these and other events...**

As usual, watch for blasts and check the Top Cats event calendar regularly and by all means

SAVE THE CLUB ACTIVITY DATES FIRST!

Make sure to send any activity or ride ideas to Greg Smith so they can get it on the calendar and get the word out to the club.

Feel free to reach out to me anytime via my email: gene.rigsby@gmail.com, or phone, 847-770-9425.

Looking forward to seeing you there....
Gene "Lucky" Rigsby





KAUTION KORNER



Top Cats Four 'R's!

By: Wayne 'Traveler' Kirkpatrick,
Senior Road

Please Not Another Safety acronym!

As experienced riders, it is not uncommon for new riders to seek advice or for older riders to become mentors. Often, those older, experienced riders tend to gloss over the basics and assume that all riders, regardless of experience, know the basics. It's safer not to believe that and to assume that any rider who seeks advice needs to understand the very basic tenets of riding. Airline pilots start with the basics before each flight to assure safety.

There are some similarities between the causes of plane crashes and the reasons for motorcycle accidents: it's often a combination of factors, or risks, that cause incidents in both cases. And in both, the fundamental cause can usually be traced back to "human error." Just as in doing a preflight check before flying an airplane, a motorcyclist should take stock of the risk factors before their ride. Unlike the airline industry, which has many rules, regulations, and certifications in place to help prevent accidents, motorcycle riders are pretty much on their own.

Some of the most brilliant minds in the motorcycling community came up with acronyms to help us to ride safely. We have TCLOCK, AGAT, TPAD, MOTOPO, etc.

So, instead of another acronym, how about the Top Cats' **Four Rs** of riding to make us safer riders?

The Rider

The question here is, are you physically and mentally prepared to ride safely? Here are some of the most important considerations:



Physical Fitness. Physical impairments, like injuries or lack of sleep, will compromise alertness and safety.

Emotional Fitness Riders should not be preoccupied with emotional distractions.

Unimpaired Clearly, motorcycle riding and consumption of controlled / intoxicating substances is often a lethal combination. When we see a bunch of motorcycles parked outside of a bar there should be an ambulance on-site, like at racetracks, to pick up the pieces.!

Proper Gear That includes a helmet, proper boots, gloves, riding jackets and pants with armor. The more protective gear riders wears, the less the chance of serious injury.

Attitude Being arrogant and a showoff has no place in our group style of riding. Riders should display a proper attitude, and enjoy. Wheelies, stoppies, excessive speed, or other high-risk behaviors, inevitably, will lead to a rider going down and endangering themselves and others.



The Ride

Mechanical Condition. Like the pilot who does a preflight before takeoff, riders should make sure their bike is ready to ride: properly inflated tires, turn signals and brake lights working, no obvious mechanical issues, etc.

Familiarity. When we ride an unfamiliar bike, and for the first time each season, it usually takes about 30 minutes of riding before we feel "dialed in" and fully in control of the motorcycle. It's important to take it extra easy and not push any limits until your confidence level is at 100 percent.

Visibility. Are you riding a blacked-out bike (without reflectors or auxiliary lights) in black leathers, wearing a dark color helmet at night? One of the leading causes of accidents is other motorists not seeing the motorcyclist. Be visible!

Loading. If you are carrying a co rider and/or other cargo, the bike will handle differently: directional changes will be slower, braking distances will increase, and acceleration will be degraded. A slower responding bike requires adjustments to speed, following distances, and other similar riding considerations.

(Continued on page 4)

Kaution Korner, Continued

The Route



Road Conditions/Hazards. Bad pavement, tar snakes, pot holes, animals, poorly maintained rail-road crossings, road debris, and painted strips that denote cross walks, etc., can

all increase the risk of a crash. Adjust speed accordingly when these are present.

Level of Difficulty. If you've just gotten your motorcycle endorsement, or it's the first ride following a long winter, riding technically demanding roads with steep elevation changes, switchbacks, and hairpin curves should be avoided until your skill level progresses to meet such demands. Places like the Tail of the Dragon will still be there when you're ready for it.

Services Available. Riding in remote areas, where gas stations are few and far between and emergency medical service is not readily available, requires more planning and riding caution. These are typically major considerations of experienced road captains and riders.

The Riding Environment

Time of Day.

Riding into the sun, either in early morning or late evening, can severely limit a rider's ability to see where they are going and avoid hazards. Animals are more active during early morning and evening also. Try not to ride at night, because our ability to see and be seen is greatly compromised.



Weather. Fog, rain, snow, freezing temperatures, extreme heat, thunderstorms, high wind, and other types of severe weather pose a much greater threat to a motorcyclist's ability to avoid hazards and be visible to other motorists, let alone the danger of being injured by the severe weather itself.

Traffic Congestion. With drivers talking on cell phones, texting, trying to read while driving, autonomous vehicles, and the myriad of other existing distractions today, the

heightened exposure of riding in traffic is pretty obvious. Because many of those other drivers may not be alert to your presence, riders have to be extra alert to the threats developing around them. Remember, whoever has the most lug nuts also has the right of way!

If you start combining some of these hazards it's apparent that the risk profile can increase dramatically particularly in a group. If one rider goes down, it becomes a major hazard for the other riders.

Riders should continually assess the riding perils, both before and during the ride, so they can mitigate them. Sometimes, when the threat level is just too high, the best mitigation may be to (Ugh) just not ride that day.



As the Holidays approach, in whatever way we celebrate...

May we all reach out and lend a hand wherever we can!

May we bring light and goodness to all those who need!



Oil Spots

By Traveler



Aging motorcyclists



As we know, for an exhilarating sport, that may encompass many boring hours of sitting interspersed with minutes of exhilarating twisties, riding is still a physical undertaking, one that exacts a toll on your

body that only gets worse with age. Staying in the saddle well into your vintage years takes some adjustments and some compromises. Here are some of the challenges faced by aging riders, and a few ways to overcome them.

Chronic pain

Chronic pain — bad backs, aching knees, arthritis, even the lingering effects of old injuries — probably drives more retirements from riding than any other cause. Stretching before a ride can help, as can regular exercise between rides, but most sufferers turn to painkillers to get them down the road.



All pain meds come with baggage; in addition to relieving pain, some lead to kidney problems, high blood pressure, and stomach bleeding when used regularly or at high dosages. For example, NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) like ibuprofen and naproxen sodium are generally safe and effective, but side effects can include nausea, stomach bleeding, and dizziness, in some cases even when taken in the recommended dose.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is the first choice for mild to moderate pain, but not as effective as NSAIDs. Side effects, if any, are milder, and long-term use presents few risks (though taking acetaminophen and drinking alcohol can increase the odds of kidney problems). COX-2 inhibitors like celecoxib (Celebrex) are less likely to cause stomach bleeding but can cause headaches and dizziness; these side effects can be worse in older adults than in younger

adults.

Note that some might affect your ability to drive or ride safely. Talk to your health-care provider if you plan to take any of them long-term or in large doses.

Improving Motorcycle Ergonomics



The aftermarket can come to your rescue. Aftermarket accessories are much more accommodating to an aging back and shoulders, though maybe not for

long. Changing the handlebar or adding risers to the clip-ons can make the bike less strenuous to ride and, in most cases, footpegs can be raised or lowered. Just be aware of potential related issues, such as the need for longer control cables or steering clearance issues with fairings.

Most newer bikes have adjustable suspension. Softer settings on both ends might take the edge off your bike's handling, but your back will thank you.

Stock motorcycle seats are often designed by the brand's styling department to look good on the showroom floor, with little concern over actual comfort.

Again, the aftermarket has the answer in the form of off-the-shelf replacement seats, and shops that build custom saddles based on your height, weight, preferred seating position, and intended use. The Iron Butt Rally guys have a saying: Make the bike the most comfortable thing to sit on that you own. Removing pressure points on your hips and tailbone can leave you riding happily past the point where you'd usually have to stop for a rest, as well as reducing your reliance on pain meds.

Even something as minor as changing the grips helps sometimes. Arthritic fingers and hands aren't just uncomfortable, they're dangerous because they can delay your reaction to an emergency. Softer grips that reduce vibration, or are larger in diameter than stock, are common swaps.

Dealing with vision issues

Old eyes don't see as well at night as they used to, so plan your rides to end before sundown.



(Continued on pg 6)



Oil Spots, continued...

If you wear glasses, make sure your prescription is up to date, and consider carrying an extra pair. Auxiliary lights will help get you home if you're caught out after dark, and make you more conspicuous during the day. Consider prescription sunglasses as well as regular glasses.

Be careful that all prescription classes fit correctly under your visor or goggles.



Switch to a different motorcycle

If you've tried all the tricks listed so far and you're still dogged by pain and discomfort, maybe you need a change of bike, too. Trade that heavy Ultra Glide for a Low Rider or a Triumph twin. You might have to wrap your mind around a new kind of riding, but it's better than just quitting altogether.

Motorcycle manufacturers are offering more accessible, lightweight models with neutral ergonomics in the U.S. market than they have in decades, and not just retro fits. While the intent is usually to attract new riders, these bikes are also a good option for older riders who want to extend their years on two wheels.

Know your limits

Finally, older bones are brittle, older bodies heal much more slowly, and slower reflexes increase reaction times. From the vantage point of age, it's easy to see how your next crash might be your last one.



All of these are good reasons not to skimp on protective gear. Make ATTGAT your motto. Buy the best helmet, jacket, gloves, and pants you can, and wear all of them every time you ride — none of that "I'm just running down to the store". Ride a little slower, don't take as many risks, take an occasional break, and congratulate yourself on adding years to your motorcycling life.

HARLEY DAVIDSON RECALL

Harley-Davidson is recalling more than 40,000 motorcycles due to a potential for short-circuiting and increased crash risk, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Harley-Davidson and NHTSA issued the recall last week for certain FLHX, FLHXSE, FLTRX, FLTRXSE, and FLTRXSTSE models, accounting for 41,637 motorcycles.



According to the notice, a voltage regulator wire may rub on other components near the motorcycles' engine, wearing down the outer casing and exposing the wire. This can lead to short circuits and a loss of power with little to no warning to the driver, warned NHTSA.

Damaged voltage regulator harness may cause electric short

According to the NHTSA recall, the issue is with the voltage regulator output wire, which may rub on the front corner of the crankcase, or the engine housing. Over time, this can expose the wire, leading to an electrical short circuit and, as a result, a loss of electrical and driving power in affected vehicles.

This can occur when the motorcycles are in use with no real warning to the driver, the recall notice says. A sudden loss of power and inability to restart the vehicle may lead to increased crash risk.

Harley-Davidson did not report any known incidences of crashes or injuries but did note nine related field reports stemming from this issue.

What Harley-Davidson motorcycles are affected by the recall?

Five 2024 Harley-Davidson models are subject to the recall, which include:

- 2024 FLHX
- 2024 FLHXSE
- 2024 FLTRX
- 2024 FLTRXSE
- 2024 FLTRXSTSE

What to do if your Harley-Davidson is affected.

Owners of affected vehicles can bring them to their local Harley-Davidson dealership where they will inspect and as necessary, repair the voltage regulator output wire harness, and install a secondary retention strap, free of charge.

Owner notification letters are expected to be mailed in September 2024. Owners may contact Harley-Davidson customer service at 1-800-258-2464. Harley-Davidson's number for this recall is 0186. Car owners looking to check the status of their vehicles can enter their information into the NHTSA recall check at <https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls>.

(Continued on page 7)



Oil Spots, continued...

[Wall Street Journal Investigates Tesla Autopilot](#)



While media reports like this may be news to many in America, it's not news to bikers. The Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) has been and will remain steadfast in their engagement and focus on this issue.

An investigative report by the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) evaluated 222 crashes involving Teslas.

Of those 222 crashes, 44 occurred when a Tesla, operating in Autopilot, "veered suddenly." An additional 31 happened when the vehicles "failed to stop or yield." Much of the report focuses on Tesla's use of camera technology to identify surroundings on the road.

Tesla relies heavily on cameras to support its automated driving system. However, other manufacturers of autonomous vehicles use a combination of technologies, including cameras, radar, and LiDAR (Light Detection And Ranging).

Beyond the hardware issues, the report also cited slow updates to the algorithm used to support the Autopilot system. While all video footage taken during these crashes is transmitted to Tesla, they often cite protecting their proprietary technology as a reason to keep the footage from the public. In reports to NHTSA, much of the data is redacted from public view.

In analyzing some of the 222 crashes in the story, the Wall Street Journal used mechanics and hackers to download videos from crashed Teslas. This process requires physically removing the main computer from the vehicle, accessing its data, and pairing it with the video images.

The spotlight on Tesla and its Autopilot system is growing hotter. Last summer the Washington Post did their investigation into Tesla crashes. That story, titled: "The Shocking Toll of Tesla's Autopilot," included the infamous quote from former NHTSA Safety official Missy Cummings, "It's very dangerous for motorcycles to be around Teslas."

[Chicago Harley Site Of New Restaurant](#)



The village of Rosemont expects to close on the purchase of the Harley-Davidson motorcycle property in the community's entertainment district by Jan. 10, 2025.

This two-story, 20,000-square-foot Harley-Davidson dealership opened in 2019 in Rosemont. But declining sales have forced local dealers to retract their footprints.

A new restaurant, described by Mayor Brad Stephens as "pretty cool" is expected to open on the first floor of the building. The village will pay \$6 million for the purchase. Windy City, controlled by proprietor Ozzie Giglio, plans to consolidate Rosemont operations at a store in Villa Park, having already closed locations in Palatine and Wrigleyville.

All the bikes, clothes and accessories will be moved out of the Rosemont store by the end of the year, while Giglio's offices will relocate to the third floor of Rosemont's new village hall and office building.

Plans to relocate the motorcycle dealership to a new building near the Allstate Arena are scuttled, officials said.

Mayor Stephens said he cannot at this time make public the name of the likely new restaurant. He explained, however, that it will take about a year to open and occupy approximately 8,500 sq. ft. of the 20,000 sq. ft. building.



EVERY MAJOR MOTORCYCLE HELMET BRAND RANKED WORST TO BEST IN NHTSA COMPLIANCE TESTING

BY ERYNN RUIZ



Shoei Helmets

A helmet is a helmet, until you're sliding along the asphalt on your noggin. Sure, most motorcycle helmets on the market today meet minimum safety requirements. But does meeting the minimum make a motorcycle helmet brand the best? It turns out that beyond minimum requirements, some brands put in the work to meet stricter safety standards that exceed minimums. Not only that, but some receive outstanding marks when it comes to government testing.

To determine the best motorcycle helmet brands versus the worst, we've taken a look at brand compliance, meaning whether helmets pass rigorous testing standards by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and which safety standards their products meet or exceed, such as DOT, Snell, ECE, and others.

One note regarding the NHTSA's compliance reporting: NHTSA flags various issues ranging from the failure of a company to file its Manufacturer Identification with the organization to stickers that aren't permanent enough to catastrophic failures in testing. Thus, we've provided an explanation of some noted issues along with the failure rate for each brand, as the nature of the failure determines our overall rankings.

There's a lot to look for when choosing a motorcycle helmet, so here is every major motorcycle helmet brand ranked worst to best. Stay tuned after the list for more on our methodology.

14. HJC Helmets

HJC Helmets has been in the industry for decades and prides itself on innovation. It even has a wind tunnel testing laboratory



and facilities in the United States, France, Vietnam, and Korea. Despite its promised commitment to rider safety and satisfaction, HJC does not seem to go beyond the minimum safety requirements.

HJC meets DOT (Department of Transportation) standards, DOT FMVSS No. 218, according to its labeling and advertising, but does not specify other safety standards. The F71, for example, is described as "Meets or exceeds DOT approved."

Based on the NHTSA's compliance test report database, HJC had an overall failure rate of about 23%. Testing issues included failures that were both labeling and impact related. The latter is more worrisome given that impact relates to safety, whereas a label falling off won't directly harm a rider.

Given the brand's lack of additional certifications plus the test failures (and relatively high fail rate), HJC is the worst-rated in our lineup.

13. KLIM



Klim

KLIM is a relatively well-known helmet brand, and its helmets are some of the most expensive on the market. With prices starting at around \$550, KLIM helmets do offer both DOT and ECE certification. ECE ratings come from the Economic Commission for Europe, which governs traffic safety standards across Europe. An ECE 22.06 rating isn't legally required in the U.S., but it's a safety standard in Europe and is often seen as a perk on top of DOT certification. You won't find a helmet sold in the U.S. that is only ECE, though; DOT is the primary standard.

Despite the fact that some KLIM helmets have both DOT and ECE ratings, the brand only has one test in the NHTSA's database. Given that the single test identified failures in three of four impact scenarios, that means a 100% failure rate.

The lack of safety data available means KLIM cannot be one of the best helmets among our rankings. However, if you're interested in purchasing one, you can find KLIM helmets on Amazon.

(Continued on page 10)



Helmets Continued...

12. Biltwell

Biltwell



Most Biltwell helmets are listed by their product name plus the current ECE standard and DOT certification. At first glance, these relatively affordable helmets (plenty of models are just under \$300) seem like a great deal with safety in mind. When you click on a helmet's details, the DOT compliance is also highlighted.

Unfortunately, the NHTSA's testing doesn't instill complete confidence in Biltwell. To date, the NHTSA only has four results for Biltwell in its database, and all four (a combination of complete and full/open-face helmets) resulted in some failures. Granted, the failures were all related to labeling rather than true safety issues. However, the ratings mean a 100% failure rate and seem to hint that Biltwell needs to work on its labeling processes.

Further, four tests (and two out of nearly countless standards) are hardly enough information to recommend a helmet, so Biltwell didn't score well in our survey. That said, if you're interested, Biltwell helmets are readily available on Amazon.



11. AGV

AGV

A helmet is an essential piece of motorcycle gear the moment you start riding, so you don't want to take chances. In a disappointing turn of events, AGV, a middling-cost brand, doesn't appear to have the best-quality helmets on the market.

While most AGV helmets are both DOT and ECE compliant (the K6 S, for example, is denoted as DOT and E2206), not all of them performed well in the NHTSA's performance testing. A total failure rate of over 47% means AGV ranks low on our list, despite the fact that many of its full-face helmets passed testing with no issues

identified. Those that did have issues, such as the OF44H, involved both impact- (vital) and labeling-related (not so serious) failures.

Given the mixed results, AGV helmets don't perform consistently enough to inspire full confidence. However, NHTSA testing instills more confidence in the full-face helmets, meaning those might be the best option in AGV's lineup.

10. LS2

LS2 Hel-
met-
ets

LS2 helmets appear to

meet DOT and ECE standards, with some models also meeting FRHPhe-01 requirements, the FIM Racing standard for road racing helmets. A couple of LS2 helmet models also meet Snell standards, though not all.

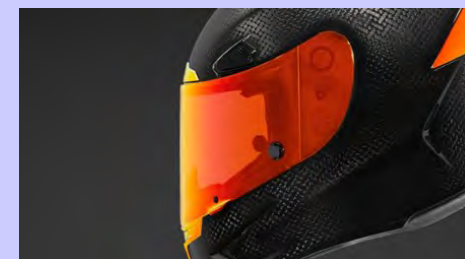
However, when it came to the NHTSA's database, LS2 helmets had an over 45% failure rate, with five out of 11 compliance tests throwing red flags. Some failures involved labeling, but one involved multiple failures across impact and penetration tests, which relate to how well the helmet can handle impact and sharp objects.

While LS2's full-face helmets tended to fare better in testing, the lack of good marks across the board leaves the brand leaning toward the lower end of our list. Further, most helmets we looked at had an ECE 22.05 rating, while 22.06 is the newer and presumably even safer standard. Even if LS2 did meet the newer standard, the high failure rate would still give us pause. If you do want to check LS2 out, Amazon carries these helmets.



9. Icon

Ride Icon



Icon helmets are priced nicely, and Icon doesn't charge extra for added style. Most Icon helmets are around \$300, making safety and flashy looks equally affordable — in theory. Many entry-level helmets from this brand meet various safety standards and come in cool color patterns, including glow-in-the-dark, vibrantly colored face shields, and more. However, it's not all good news when it comes to Icon's standards or safety record.

(Continued on page 10)

Helmets Continued...

Some Icon helmets, such as the Elsinore Monotype, meet DOT requirements, but apparently do not have any other certifications. Others, like the Airflite, which had an impact failure per the NHTSA, meet DOT, ECE 22.06, and PSC (Japan) safety standards. Because PSC isn't necessarily applicable in the U.S., it might not be wholly relevant since testing methods vary by country.

Overall, Icon had over a 45% failure rate, meaning despite its DOT and other compliance, it's not one of the best motorcycle helmet brands on the market for safety or reliability. Other brands performed better according to the NHTSA's database, including better-known ones.

8. Harley-Davidson



Harley-Davidson

Harley-Davidson makes some of the best-sounding motorcycles, but its helmets don't have such an awesome reputation across the board. While Harley-Davidson helmets like the H-D Velo H34 meet DOT and ECE 22.06 standards, not all of the brand's helmets have performed well in compliance testing.

The NHTSA reported that three of seven compliance tests had issues, with, at times, some seriously concerning failures related to impact and penetration testing. However, the NHTSA only tested partial helmets, not full-face models. Overall, the lack of data on any full-face helmets is what resulted in Harley-Davidson's lower spot on our list. Models like the H-D Velo H34 (this model rolled out at only \$150) might very well be some of the most affordable and safest on the market, but we need more data to speak to the latter point. It's not that Harley-Davidson helmets aren't safe, just that other brands instill a higher level of consumer confidence given their track records (and extra standards).

7. Scorpion

Scorpion USA

Scorpion helmets mark a turning point in our list of the



worst-to-best-ranked helmets based on NHTSA testing. While Scorpion's helmets mostly appear to conform to DOT requirements (some denote ECE approval), a rather low failure rate of just over 22% based on 18 total NHTSA tests inspires some confidence in the brand.

No tests in recent years have flagged any issues, but circa 2014, the NHTSA did note a test issue for Scorpion EXO helmets. That model failed one element of the impact test, while an older version of a similar model had multiple impact failures. Times may have changed, but we'd like to see more data to really be sure.

Given the low overall failure rate, availability of a decent amount of tests, and no new failed tests, Scorpion seems like it's a middling brand we might take a chance on for motorcycle helmets. It also doesn't hurt that Scorpion helmets are very affordable, starting at around \$110; you can find Scorpion helmets on Amazon.

6. Simpson

Simpson Motorcycle Helmets



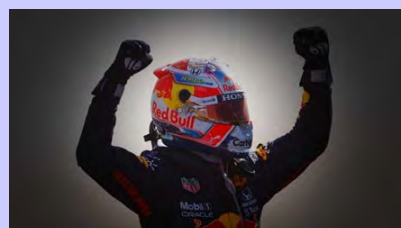
Simpson motorcycle helmets had the most safety certifications of any of the most popular brands, but it couldn't quite scale to the top of our list for a few reasons. We bumped Simpson ahead of other competitive motorcycle helmet brands because it offers helmets with DOT, ECE, Snell, SFI, FIA, and CMR standards.

While Simpson doesn't explain all of its ratings, Snell, for example, is a well-known non-profit certification body. Simpson notes that its helmets are certified to Snell SA2020, which denotes motorcycle helmets suitable for use in competitive automotive sports. Such compliance suggests that Simpson's helmets could be safer than a range of other helmets on our list.

That said, Simpson's helmets are not as well-tested as other brands in terms of NHTSA compliance. With only four tests, and all four failing due to issues like penetration and retention tests, and labeling, it's hard to put 100% confidence in Simpson's products without further proof of safety.

5. Schuberth

Schuberth



(Continued on page 11)



Helmets Continued...

Schuberth is another helmet brand with a variety of certifications, depending on the helmet you choose.

Most Schuberth helmets appear to meet DOT and ECE standards, while some meet others like S.R.S. and P/J. P/J is of particular interest because this rating means the helmet is certified for safety as both a full-face helmet (P) and an open-face helmet (J). However, the NHTSA declares that "a full-face design is a good indicator of a safe helmet," suggesting that modular designs are not ideal.

While all brands provide warranty coverage against manufacturing defects, only a few select brands go beyond that minimum and offer replacement coverage if your helmet is in an accident. Schuberth is one of them. The company offers a replacement program where you pay one-third of the cost of a new helmet.

Because Schuberth offers multi-compliant helmets, only had labeling failures in its NHTSA tests, and offers a comprehensive post-accident replacement program, it ranks more toward the best than the worst on our list.

4. BILT by Cycle Gear

BILT

There are many places to find motorcycle gear on a budget, and Cycle Gear has a reputation for being one of them. Full-face BILT helmets start at under \$100 and range to around \$300, making for a decent entry-level option for motorcyclists on a budget.

BILT also makes a commitment to meeting DOT and ECE 22.05 standards, which check the basic boxes. What's more, BILT performs fairly well in compliance testing, with only one failure related to labeling out of five tests. In terms of penetration and impact tests, BILT's motorcycle helmets did well.

Note that not all of BILT's helmets are full-face, so not all of the NHTSA tests were on full-face helmet models. Still, none had performance-related failures noted. While we'd like to see more testing for reassurance, a 20% failure rate solely related to labeling concerns isn't the worst on our list by far.

3. Bell

Bell Helmets

Easily one of the most recognizable names in motorcycle helmets, Bell has a positive reputation overall and did well



in our NHTSA results comparison. Not only did the NHTSA run 31 tests on Bell helmets, but the brand performed exceedingly well with a failure rate under 20%.

As far as standards, Bell only confirms that it meets DOT and ECE, but its performance in the NHTSA testing speaks for itself. Most of the compliance test issues were related to labeling failures, with low odds of impact failures given the NHTSA's data.

In addition to its overall positive track record with performance, Bell is also one of only two big-name motorcycle helmet brands with a discount offer if you get in an accident. The company notes that if your motorcycle (or bike) helmet is involved in an accident, you might be eligible for a discount on a new Bell helmet. While it doesn't cost a whole lot to buy a brand-new Bell helmet — prices start at around \$130 — it's just one more thing Bell does to set itself apart.



2. Shoei

Shoei Helmets

Shoei is a highly

ranked motorcycle helmet brand on our list because of its multiple certifications and low failure rate. Shoei helmets are, of course, DOT compliant as a baseline, but the company also has Snell certification on many of its helmets.

While some lower-priced models (the RF-SR at \$400, for example) are DOT only, higher-end models like the X-FIFTEEN are DOT, ECE, and Snell M2020R certified. M2020R is Snell's general motorcycle helmet for public sale designation, but this shows that Shoei goes above and beyond the minimum.

Shelling out \$900 or more for a helmet is quite a hefty expense, but based on the NHTSA's testing, Shoei achieved a failure rate of just under 18%. Relatively few helmets had impact failures, and most test flags were related to labeling. Overall, the odds of any failure are relatively low; Shoei had the lowest failure rating of any motorcycle helmet we looked at. Even better, the brand is available on Amazon.

(Continued on page 11)

Helmets Continued...



1. Arai

Arai

Based on our review of the NHTSA compliance database and major helmet manufacturer brands' safety standards, Arai is the absolute best motorcycle helmet brand. Not only does Arai conform to DOT and ECE standards, but hundreds of its motorcycle and motocross helmets are Snell-certified, as confirmed by Snell's database.

In the NHTSA database, Arai had a failure rate of around 23%, which wasn't the absolute rock-bottom lowest. Yet combined with Arai's commitment to improving safety and meeting various industry stand-

ards, the figure doesn't look so bad — especially because most failures were related to labeling.

Arai has the best full-face helmet money can buy, and you'll need a lot of it for the Corsair-X. That said, most helmets last around five years, but Arai's can last for seven. Plus, Arai dedicates a lot of energy to improving helmet safety, as the brand explains on its website. Its technical philosophy? "At Arai, safety standards such as Snell and DOT are our starting point, not our end goal."

It's still a good idea to wear full gear (and take a motorcycle safety course), but a safe helmet goes a long way toward protecting you on your bike.



Methodology

Ride Icon

Our methodology surveyed two main elements to determine motorcycle helmet brand quality. First, we explored the compliance of each brand as determined by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, based on the NHTSA's compliance database for motorcycle helmet compliance test reports.

We looked at not only the number of failed tests but also the nature of those tests. Helmet brands that had many failures related to safety issues were considered worse, while those with labeling or other cosmetic issues were considered better. No brand has a completely perfect record, and even helmets that had some failures also succeeded in other areas of testing. Because the testing is judged as pass fail with the NHTSA, we do not have specific data relating to the areas in which any one helmet brand succeeded, except to say that it didn't fail.

Next, we considered each helmet brand's adherence to various industry safety standards. Brands that went above and beyond were moved up the quality list for having stricter and a variety of safety controls. For example, all helmets in the United States must meet DOT (Department of Transportation) standards. However, Snell (an independent, non-profit standard-determining body) and ECE (a European standard) are not. When a manufacturer goes beyond the minimum, that's a plus in our book.



Santa knows now too...
Ask him to bring you the helmet of
your choice...
and enjoy your Ride!
Looks like Santa's got it right!



RIDE SAFE and VOTE, VOTE, VOTE!



The most important thing we do in Top Cats is safe riding. The second most important thing we do is smart voting. Our riding season has been a safe one and now it's time to vote in our annual Club elections. The Board of Directors approved the slate. **Voting will occur at our 3 December General Meeting.** For the 2025 - 2026 term, consistent with our By Laws, we have the following positions open for a two – year term.

President (2025-2026):

(Current nominee - Gene Rigsby)

Vice President (2025):

Bozenna Hasztrakiewicz

Director, Membership (2025-2026):

(Current nominee - Ted Makarewicz)

Director, Activities (2025-2026):

(Current nominee - Greg Smith)

Remember, to be eligible to hold office and to vote, you must be a Member in Good Standing. That requires that you meet the following requirements by November 30th of each calendar year. (New members will become eligible to vote following their 12 month probationary status.)

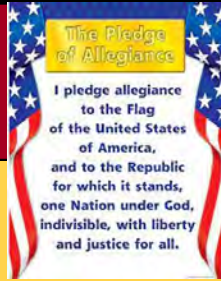
- ▶ Attend a minimum of 5, official Top Cats events per year.
- ▶ Attend the Group Riding and Safety Seminar within your first year then once every year of membership.
- ▶ All dues or any other financial obligations have been met.

Our candidates have demonstrated the passion and the leadership to continue to take Top Cats forward into the next two riding seasons. Following elections, please congratulate our new Board members.

NISRA Banquet!

A great event with so many wonderful moments! The best moment of all came when Danella Maca won THE BEST TREE!





General Membership Meeting Minutes November 5th, 2024

Respectfully Submitted
by: Jane Smith

President's Section: Gene Rigsby

Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Guests - None

Announcements

Birthdays:

Nov. 5 – Michael Bradbury

Nov. 7 – Andy Hay

Nov. 16 – Mark Sullivan

Nov. 17 – Emil Kornecki

Nov. 20 – Christine Kimball

- Membership dues for 2025 are due today. Don has copies of the waiver to sign to turn into him also.
- Mike has Ric Case memorial patches from the HOG Chapter for \$5.00 each if interested.

Vice President: Open Position

- Bozena Haszlkiewicz has volunteered to run for this position in our election next month.

Past President: Wayne Kirkpatrick

Election Overview

- All incumbents have agreed to run again for their positions as no others have come forward to run. That includes Gene Rigsby for President and Ted Makarewicz for Membership Director and Greg Smith for Activities Director. Elections will take place at the December General Meeting.

Safety: Mike Bradbury

Accident/Safety Review

- Mike briefly reviewed his Kaution Korner article in the November ROAR about the challenges of riding as we age. A video was also viewed discussing this topic. We should analyze our physical capabilities. Are we mobile enough to get on and off the bike easily? Can we manage the weight or size of the bike? Do we have challenges of high blood pressure, diabetes, hearing, or sight problems? Only you know when you don't feel comfortable on the bike. Be honest with yourself.
- An acronym to help us decide is **IMSAFE**.
- **Illness.** Not just cold/flu, but any chronic illness you may suffer from.
- **Medication.** Does it affect your perception or balance or make you drowsy?
- **Stress.** Will this impair your ability to react quickly to situations?
- **Alcohol.** Do not ride if you are under the influence of alcohol (or drugs).
- **Fatigue.** Being tired can impair your cognitive and

physical abilities to ride safely.

- **Emotion.** Are there things going on in your life that are affecting you emotionally?
- Wayne previewed the Kaution Korner tip for next month – night riding. Some challenges are poor visibility, animals, pavement conditions, other drivers on the road, and judging where objects are in the dark.

Membership: Ted Makarewicz

No new interests.

Activities: Greg Smith

Recent Activities:

- October 12 – Ride for Screams (Gene). Because of the threat of rain, the group did not ride but met at the Rigsby's for a picnic (under the canopy). Turned out it did not rain until later in the day - oh well!
- October 27 - GRASS class. No RSVP's were received but instructors showed up just in case. A class will be held in March 2025 to get us ready for the riding season. May make it a requirement for riders to attend once a year. Always good to keep the info fresh in our minds.

Future Activities:

- November 23 – NISRA Fashion Show/Luncheon (Mary). TC has reserved a table for 10. We have 1 space left if anyone is interested in going - \$75/ticket.
- December 1 – Toys 4 Tots Ride (Ted). We usually meet for breakfast at Podhalanka Polish restaurant in Chicago, however they have closed. Ted will look for another alternative. More details will follow.
- February 15 – Awards Dinner (Mike/Gene). Will be held at Emmett's in Palatine again. Mark your calendar. Details will follow as it gets closer.
- Please let Greg know if you have any ideas for activities for the group during the winter months – breakfast/dinners, shows, concerts – anything!

Other Activities:

- November 9 – Rolling Thunder will be presenting their "Stand To" Veteran's Day Ceremony at Woodstock HD from 10:30 am – 4:00 pm. Includes a guest speaker, remembrance ceremony, various veteran organizations and food served by Porkies.
- December 14 – Rolling Thunder will participate in the Wreaths Across America at Fort Sheridan National Cemetery. Invites will go out to Top Cats and two HOG Chapters.
- February 2025 - A CPR/First Aid Class will be held at WSHD. More details will follow.

(Continued on Page 15)



BOARD MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2023

Respectfully Submitted
by: Jane Smith

President's Section: Gene Rigsby

- The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. via Zoom. All Board members were present except for Ted (attending a funeral).

Past President: Wayne Kirkpatrick

- Election 2025
- All positions are good to go. Ted and Greg have agreed to serve another 2 years. Gene has agreed to serve another 2 years.
- Wayne questioned whether the Vice President position should be appointed or elected for now. It would only be to finish out the 1-year term vacated by Ric Case. Bozena H. has volunteered to serve in this position. Wayne moved and Greg seconded that we would appoint Bozena to fill the vacant position for this coming year and next year the position would be up for election.

The slate for the 2025 Board will be as follows:

- President (Gene) 2025/2026
- Vice President (Bozena) 2025
- Treasurer (Don) 2025
- Secretary (Jane) 2025
- Director-Safety (Mike) 2025
- Director-Charity (Mary) 2025
- Director-Membership (Ted) 2025/2026
- Director-Activities (Greg) 2025/2026

Treasurer: Don DeLordo

- Report/Review: Don reviewed the financial report.
- Membership dues for 2025 are due Dec. 1st. Gene will send out a blast to remind those who haven't paid yet.

Activities: Greg Smith

Past Events:

- Oct 13 – Ride for Screams!! (Rigsby). The weather was iffy, so the ride was eliminated but a picnic lunch was still held at Rigby's.

Future Events:

- Nov. 23 - NISRA Fashion Show. A table has been reserved for Top Cats and it is full.
- Dec. 1 – Toys for Tots (Ted). No details yet.
- Feb. 15 – Awards Banquet – Save the date.
- Need some ideas for winter activities. Let's mention this at the General Meeting.

Safety/RC: Mike Bradbury

- Suggested that we require members to attend GRASS once a year to remain in good standing. Maybe institute a ride or lunch after the class– make it more social. Also suggested that portions of the GRASS class be presented at each General meeting to keep the information fresh in members' minds.
- Mike will schedule a Road Captain meeting in late January or early February.
- A CPR class will be held at Woodstock HD. Watch for details.
- The Rosemont HOG Chapter is disbanding at the end of the year. Without a dealership we should encourage their members to join our club.

Membership/Products: Ted Makarewicz (Absent).
No report.

Charity: Mary Kirkpatrick

- Woodstock HD has not confirmed the dates of June 21 or 22. We need to push them for a decision or change our venue – perhaps McHenry American Legion.
- Will ask at the next General Meeting for new ideas for the event next year.

Secretary: Jane Smith - Nothing.

Meeting adjourned by Gene at 8:04 p.m.

General Meeting, Continued!

Charity: Mary Kirkpatrick

- Still waiting to hear back from WSHD on suggested dates.
- Looking for ideas to help raise additional money during the year to help support our charity.

Products: Ted Makarewicz

- Gene will send out a list of available TC wear on sale before the next meeting. Holidays are coming!!!

50/50 Raffle: Mary Kirkpatrick – 50/50 was won by Ted. Ted donated his portion to NISRA!

Meeting was adjourned by Gene at 7:55 p.m.





Gifts to think about for the Holidays coming up...



Personalized Bobble Head.
<https://www.dolls2u.com/motorcycle-rider-p-15615.html>

1. Upload or email your pictures
 2. Select the options
 3. Confirm your order
- Prices Vary!



Etsy... \$13.95



Beer Barrell \$155 or
Brandy Decanter \$79 - Amazon



Tire Tread Ring
Motoloot.com
\$39.99

Motorcycle Bike wing Ring
BikeChainJewelry.com
\$23.00



December Birthdays and Anniversaries!

17 Emil Kornecki



Happy Days to our Top Cats Celebrities for December!!
Let us know your special dates so that we can celebrate with you!

No December Anniversaries (That we know of...)



*Top Cats Buy, Sell, Trade....
The best way to ensure good quality at fair prices!*

GREAT DEALS!

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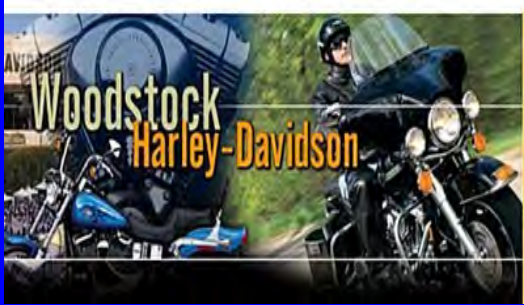


*Network with your fellow
Riders here...*

And Be Thankful!



Support the TOP CATS Patrons



Woodstock HD and Staff Support our Top Cat's Ride, Rock Rumble Charity Ride!

[Knight Performance \(Harleys only\)](#)

Contact: **Eric Knight**

304 N. Johnson St

Harvard, IL 60033

ericknight1@hotmail.com

(815) 770-0302

[TAK MC \(Primarily Harleys\)](#)

Contact: **Tim Harwood**

28841 N. Darrell Road

McHenry, IL 60051

timharwood11@yahoo.com

(708) 525-6316

[WAR Performance \(All makes plus dyno and storage\)](#)

Contact: **Mike Witt**

120 Grant Highway

Marengo, IL 60152

Membership Has Its Privileges!

All suppliers and vendors who support the Top Cats by providing discounts to Top Cats members will be listed in ROAR.

Sign-up your favorite merchant today!

GRASS Classes are held at the Keller -Williams Offices!

Thanks, Greg for supporting our Top Cat's Safety Class!



Greg Smith

Keller - Williams Success Realty

600 Hart Rd.
Suite 105
Barrington, IL 60010

847.870.0957

Have one of our own Top Cats work with you to buy or sell your home!

NISRA Families have so many wonderful opportunities because of the NISRA staff... Can we find ways to continue to help them?





RIDES & EVENTS

Date	Ride/Event	Location	Destination	Time	Leader
Sunday, December 1st	Toys 4 Tots	The Copernicus Foundation	Toys and Podhalanka	9:30 am	Makarewicz
Tuesday, December 3rd	General Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Tuesday, December 10th	Board Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Tuesday, January 7th	General Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Tuesday, January 14th	Board Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Tuesday, February 4th	General Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Tuesday, February 11th	Board Meeting	Palatine	Alley 64	7:00 pm	Rigsby
Saturday, February 15th	TC Banquet	Palatine	Emmets	5:00 pm	Smith/ DeLordo
IDEAS?	Talk to	Greg or Rick	And get them	On the	Calendar!

All ride and event information along with the Photo Gallery can be found at www.TopCats.org.



Barrington Library

Location and Hours

505 N. Northwest Highway
Barrington, IL 60010

847-382-1300
balibrary.org

See the Top Cats Archive

FREE ADVERTISING in ROAR for TOP CATS Business Owners

Attention all Top Cats business owners!

As part of our ongoing philosophy to support our members and goal to provide a more value-rich publication, we are now offering free advertising space in ROAR for Top Cats business owners. Each business owner can submit advertising content and graphics up to 2 X 3.5 inches (Business Card size) for their company.

We will run the ad for 3 months after which you will need to resubmit it.

This offer is for Top Cats business owners only. We are not accepting advertising for other businesses at this time.

Submit your ad along with contact information to the ROAR editors at ROAR@TOPCATS.org



ROAR



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For more information about the Top Cats visit our website at www.TopCats.org

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