

Scorpion EXO-700 Helmet

I DID NOT EXPECT to like the Scorpion helmet. It was inexpensive, and it was not a name I respected yet. I was also skeptical of their claims of a 100% fog-free shield. But the idea of finding a helmet for under \$200 that performs as well as those costing three times as much was appealing.

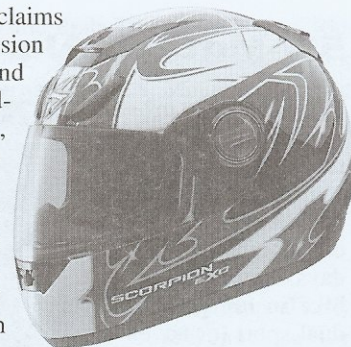
A good helmet must cover all the safety bases—DOT/Snell certification at a minimum. I also look for reflective paint on key design elements. Right behind safety is comfort—weight, ventilation, noise, interior padding quality, resistance to fogging and the inclusion of a breath deflector. Also, how easy is the helmet to live with: Are shields easy to change? Is the liner removable?

I was also looking for helmets with an adjustable visor or face shield to block twilight sun glare; a shield surface where water instantly beads up; a locking mechanism that makes it easy to secure the helmet to a bike; and a wider chin strap. A bigger chin strap would be more comfortable and would distribute the load better in case of a collision.

The first impression I had of the Scorpion was of a solid, tight, well-made helmet. Scorpion's external shell is made of fiberglass and Kevlar. The face shield fits snugly, which makes it quiet. My extra-large helmet weighs 3.75 lbs. This puts it just a few ounces over the claimed weight of my higher priced Arai. The interior padding on the Scorpion is plush and comfortable, making the slight extra weight less noticeable.

This is the first helmet I've owned that felt properly ventilated. Noise is difficult to measure and highly subjective, but in A to B tests between the Scorpion and my Arai, I found them comparable, with perhaps a slight edge to the Arai.

I was most skeptical of the claims of a fog-free shield. Clear vision is critical to good riding. And like many riders who've ridden in the humid southeast, I've exhausted a host of after-market solutions in the quest for a fog-free visor. Nothing has worked as well as the Scorpion's fog-free shield, a feature that now makes me reach for the Scorpion on multi-day trips.



The pads and lining come out of the Scorpion helmet easily and the liner is washable. On a hot day, you can soak the liner to cool your head.

Switching shields on the Scorpion is idiot-proof and takes less than 20 seconds. You push the shield all the way up, twist the pivot discs on each side until they're lined up and the shield pops right off. Push the new shield on and the spring-loaded pins snap into place. This is the best and fastest system for changing shields I've ever encountered. Replacement shields in smoke, dark smoke or clear retail for a very fair \$35.95.

Scorpion has proved that inexpensive helmets don't have to be low quality. Budget-conscious shoppers can get a highly protective helmet with features that match—and in some ways surpass—the more expensive big brand names. —Steve Larsen

Scorpion Sports—\$199; 25921 Atlantic Ocean Blvd., Lake Forest, CA 92630; (888) 672-6774; www.scorpionusa.com

Street Strategy

One-Way Blunders DON'T ASSUME

EVERYONE KNOWS IT'S A ONE-WAY STREET.

by Ken Condon

YOU'RE RIDING THROUGH an urban neighborhood on your way to work on a two-lane road where both lanes go in the same direction. There are crossroad intersections every 1000' or so with a stoplight or stop sign at each intersection. Most of the stoplights are synched to each other, allowing traffic to move at a steady rate. You are behind a slower car in the right-hand lane, so you decide to change lanes to overtake the slower driver. You pass at a relaxed pace, knowing that the one-way road continues for several more blocks. Once past the car you decide to move back into the right lane.

Only moments after you return to the right-hand lane a car pulls out into the left lane heading in the wrong direction! Yikes! The inattentive driver passes to your left with a puzzled look on her face as you attempt to signal her mistake. She disappears out of your peripheral vision still accelerating. Suddenly, you hear skidding tires behind you and the sound of crunching metal and plastic. You check your mirrors before pulling over to assess the damage.

The head-on collision involved two cars in addition to the errant driver's vehicle. The first car in line took the brunt of the hit with the car following rear-ending the unfortunate driver. Cell phones were being dialed to dispatch emergency personnel, so you go on your way.

Your thoughts swarm around the close call you just experi-



enced. Had you continued to ride in the left-hand lane, you could easily have been the victim of the driver's error.

It may have been dumb luck that you were in the right-hand lane at the moment the driver entered the one-way street in the wrong direction, but you can be grateful that a lesson was learned without harm to you. While most drivers recognize a one-way street, there is the real possibility that an approaching driver unfamiliar with the neighborhood will turn from an intersecting road heading in the wrong direction. To avoid being caught up in this possibility, avoid the left-hand lane in two lane one-way streets. And keep your eyes peeled for this scenario even when riding on single lane one-way roadways.