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Helmet Information

The information below is based on internet research, talking to vendors in stores, talking with club members who have purchased helmets, and purchasing two helmets.

Pricing is generally the same wherever you go (store or internet), but it does vary. However, on the internet you might get free shipping and a free helmet bag. It is worth shopping around.

The only places around here to try on an automobile helmet is Speed Unlimited in Morningside (near Andrews Air Force base), and OG Racing in Sterling, VA. Call ahead to ensure they have helmets in stock. Otherwise, to try on a helmet you have to visit a motorcycle store. Also, online sites have measuring guides for selecting the correct size. They seem to work pretty well.

"DOT" rated helmets may be acceptable at some (not all) drag race tracks. Otherwise, this rating is useless to you; DOT helmets are not accepted for autocross or track day driving.

The SCCA and NCCC both require Snell Foundation ("Snell") SA rated helmets. The latest series is SA 2015. The previous series is SA 2010, which is still acceptable today, and probably through 2020. I recommend buying a Snell SA 2015 helmet; it will be acceptable for 10 years. SA 2000 and 2005 series helmets are now obsolete, and no longer acceptable.

The "SA" rating stands for "Special Applications" and is designed for all automobile low speed and high speed events, including drag race, High Speed Driving Events (HPDE), high speed or low speed Autocross, "track days", high speed license classes, and real racing. "SA" helmets are designed to absorb multiple impacts and are fire/flame proof. Some vendors might say that "M" rated helmets are perfectly fine. Not so. You should definitely get an SA rated helmet for automobile events.

The "M" rating (as in Snell M 2015) is designed primarily for motorcycle applications. M rated helmets look and feel exactly like SA helmets. However, M helmets are designed to withstand only one impact and they are not flame resistant. SA helmets are usually about \$100 more expensive than their M counterparts.

"Bell" seems to be the industry standard in medium to high-end helmets. One notch down is Pyrotech (which is a division of Bell) and G-Force. Other models include RCI, RaceQuip, Zamp, and others. Simpson is a favorite, but more expensive. On the low end, prices range from about \$175 to \$375. Pricing goes up from there. Low cost helmets are safe and perfectly acceptable.

There is no difference in safety rating between open face and closed face models. It's a personal preference. Note that some people do not like the fit of an open face helmet. Depending on the manufacturer, they can actually fit somewhat tight around the cheek and jaws. Often times the same size closed face helmet will not feel as tight, even though it wraps around the chin. Also, some people prefer close face helmets for the extra protection to the face in case of air bag

deployment. Others prefer the less restrictive feel of the open face style. Face shields can be removed from the closed face models to make them less restrictive, and to make it easier to put on glasses or sun glasses. (Face shields are not usually necessary since we are driving closed cockpit cars with a big windshield).

In the past Pyrotec and G-Force helmets seemed to be priced nearly the same, but that may be changing. Pyrotec is a division of Bell. Both brands come in white, black, and different graphics designs (extra cost). As stated, Zamp, Bell, Simpson, and others are all good names. Some folks have purchased white helmets and then applied their own graphics or decals from harrisdecals.com (not necessary.... but fun)! White or black, plain or graphics – it's all just personal choice. Just make sure you get a Snell SA 2015 rated helmet.

There are several internet vendors to choose from. Exchanges are usually free, but you will pay for shipping both ways (seems to be the industry standard). And, most internet vendors charge a 15% re-stocking fee for returns. Note that vendor inventories fluctuate, and SA 2015 helmets are just now becoming readily available, so *don't wait until the last minute to order a helmet*. Your vendor may have to drop-ship your order to you from the manufacturer. Leave yourself several weeks to make a return if necessary. Spring is the busy season, and there can be an inventory crunch. Order early.

Several club members have helmets, and would probably be happy to let other members try them on for size.

NOTE: if you are new to the Autocross world and don't have a helmet, but want to try out the sport, some events may have "loaner" helmets available to first-timers. (Best to check their flyer or call ahead first and confirm). HPDE and Track Day events do not provide loaner helmets.

Some popular vendors/info sites:

ogracing.com

pyrotec.com

summitracing.com

discoveryparts.com

TeamDI.com

gforce.com

soloperformance.com

www.jegs.com

harrisdecals.com (you can get lost in this site)!