

Understanding Properly Rated Helmets for Motorsports Activities

Helmets are considered one of the most important pieces of safety gear for a driver in motorsports. Over the years helmet technology has evolved and so have the requirements for most motorsports events. While there are several types of certifications for modern helmets, the Sport Compact Dirt Racing Association requires that all helmets meet the standards of the Snell Memorial Foundation. A Snell certification is considered one of the gold standards for helmet testing and is recognized by every major racing body.

Drivers at SCDRA events are required to wear a helmet with a Snell rating of SA2010 or newer. Questions often arise about the certification process and what are the difference between ratings. Drivers without the properly rated helmet will not be allowed to compete in a SCDRA event under any circumstances.

The Snell Foundation tests dozens of types of helmets based on their designated use and has categories such as Motorcycling, Elite Automotive Sports, Kart, SA Automotive Sports as well as Equestrian, Skiing and Cycling. Some helmets can look similar but are designed and tested for different applications. For the 2021 season the only acceptable helmets for use at SCDRA events are rated SA2010 or SA2015. Anything older than SA2010 will not be allowed. The rating SA is for Competitive Automotive Sports. The Snell Foundation describes the differences in this way:

The SA standard was designed for competitive auto racing while the M standard was for motorcycling and other motorsports. The K standard was released to accommodate helmets used in karting. There are three major differences between them:

The SA standard requires flammability test while the M and K standards do not.

The SA and K standards allow for a narrower visual field than the M standard (Some SA and K certified helmets may not be street legal).

The SA and K standards include a rollbar multi-impact test while the M standard does not.

The date code (2010, 2015) refers to the expiration of the certification, which is 12 years from the date shown. For example, a SA2010 helmet is acceptable until 2022. This rating is easily found usually underneath the liner of the helmet. Helmet shoppers should look for a helmet with a 2015 certification to get the longest use from their investment. The Snell Foundation also offers guidelines for purchasing the right helmet.

Helmets with an M-rating or DOT-ratings are not acceptable. Motorcycle helmets do not have the proper safety requirements for car use, specifically a rollbar multi-impact test.