
Helmet Heat

By Mark Hurley, Chapter Historian May 7, 2020

When you're hot, you're hot, when you're not you're not, but in July, it's hot a lot!!! When I got home after an excellent chapter ride one fine 100-degree day last July, I was pretty toasted. I think y'all know what I mean.

So, I cracked a cold beer and set to thinking about ways to beat that sweltering Texas heat we all look forward to every summer. You see, I started riding at 12 years old on a red Vespa back when cars had wide whitewall tires. I've donated some blood and flesh to the road gods a few times since then and know I am still here and relatively mobile because I believe in wearing All The Gear All The time. But it ain't easy wearing All The Gear in the summer! Without question, my helmet saved my life once when I was young and stupid. Most of us wear helmets and should find this article interesting. Of course, the amount of PPE one wears is every rider's choice.

No doubt, your helmet gets uncomfortable quickly on any given Texas summer ride. I wondered just how hot your helmet and you actually get on a 100-degree day and figured out an easy way to test this. Having one of each three popular DOT helmet types and a couple of different colors, Full Face (modular, gloss black), $\frac{3}{4}$ Open Face (white & silver), Half Helmet (flat black) gave me a sample population for my experiment.

I plopped all four helmets down on my patio table in mid-afternoon full sun. After an hour, I shot my infrared thermometer gun on the top and inside top of each helmet three times for a consistent reading.



Helmet Heat

Test Results were very interesting:

<u>Helmet:</u>	<u>¾ White</u>	<u>¾ Silver</u>	<u>Half Flat Black</u>	<u>Full-Face Gloss Black</u>
Surface Temp	132°	154°	209°	190°
Inside Temp	116°	129°	123°	130°

Conclusions:

- Your brain friggin fries on hot days!
- White was the coolest color (temperature wise) inside (116°) and surface (132°).
- Flat black was the hottest color inside (123°) and surface (209°) even with half helmet “openness”.
- All helmets were significantly hotter than the 100 ambient both on the surface and inside!!
- The ¾ helmet data showed white 200° cooler on the surface and 130° cooler inside than silver. Some colors ARE cooler than others!
- Could we assume, then, a white half helmet should be the coolest? Kim Barrett and our local motor police might know this!
- I have another half helmet I will paint white to test on the next 100° day and follow up with the chapter on those results.

This is as far as my experiment is going. While there might likely be different data points for temperature measurement “in the wind”, you still cook when stopped and rolling in 1st gear traffic, regardless. This information is sufficient for me to seriously consider a white half or ¾ helmet for hot weather riding.