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Rad & Ron

Inflatable bicycle helmet does not meet the safety standard

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The Swedish company Hövding is developing an inflatable bicycle helmet whose design has been raised to the skies. But security seems to be deficient, shows a new test of our French sister magazine.

The Hövding bicycle helmet only consists of a thick collar around the neck. In the event of a collision, an airbag inflates from the collar with lightning speed and protects the head from damage. In theory anyway. When the French consumer magazine Que Choisir, which is part of the same test organization as Råd & Rön, tested Hövding, it did not meet the protection criteria prescribed by international standards.



For example, an inflated Chief did not absorb enough energy in the standardized test where the helmet is dropped against a 130 mm wide steel anvil. The result was significantly worse than for ordinary bicycle helmets. The company Hövding explains the results by saying that their helmet should instead be tested against wider metal objects than the standard 130 mm, then the results will be much better. But in traffic there are many scenarios where head protection against narrow, hard objects is crucial. It is far from always the cyclist's head hits the wide asphalt, the helmet should also protect against metal posts, curbs and the like.

The French lab test also shows that Hövding takes a long time to inflate, 382 milliseconds. In comparison, airbags for motorcycles must be fully inflated in less than 200 milliseconds to be sold. Every thousandth of a second delay increases the risk of hitting the street or the crashing car without adequate head protection.

When Hövding got to see the test results, the company went straight to the offensive and rejected all measurements as irrelevant. Because Hövding's helmet is so different, the company claims that no existing standards can be used. The lab hired by Que Choisir firmly rejects Hövding's claims and believes that accepted test standards can be applied to the helmet. The lab is reputable and is used, among others, by several French government ministries.

Hövding refers instead to his "accredited test method" which must show that the inflatable helmet meets all safety requirements. However, the accreditation only consists of letting the Swedish laboratory SP test the helmet according to criteria that SP considered reasonable. No third party in the form of an authority or other lab has reviewed the test method. However, SP explicitly agrees that Hövding is a safe bicycle helmet.

After Hövding became aware of the negative test results, threatening emails were sent out to all the European consumer newspapers the company thought would publish the results. Råd & Rön's test manager received the following request:

We hereby wish to ensure that you have paid attention to the errors and refrain from publishing information about Hövding, based on these test results. If you do not make a correction, or alternatively choose to publish, despite knowing about the incorrectly performed tests, you will cause Hövding great damage with the weight and dignity of your recommendations among consumers. Hövding has invested considerable resources in the development and testing of our unique product and in such circumstances Hövding is forced to take legal action if you do not follow our appeal.

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