



October 25th, 2010

EU Member States Take Action - The Joint Action on leisure helmets

Recent skiing accidents have drawn Market Surveillance Authorities' attention to the broader question of wearing helmets. **PROSAFE**, a non-profit organization aiming to enhance market surveillance through best practice has brought together eleven EU Member States and relevant stakeholders, in order to run a Joint Market Surveillance Action on helmets. **The Joint Action** formally **started on December 2009** and will **end on November 2010**. The management of the project is financially supported by the European Commission.

The use of helmets in sports such as **snowboarding, skateboarding, horse riding and bike riding** is essential to avoid serious head injuries, and in some countries, it is already mandatory or at least highly recommended to wear them. However, it is important that the helmets are used safely.

The Joint Action targets helmets for leisure purposes and focuses on:

- **Helmets for alpine skiers and snowboarders** in relation to EN1077:2007;
- **Helmets for pedal cyclists and for users of skateboards and roller skates** (in relation to EN1078:1997 and EN1078:1997/A1:2005);
- **Equestrian (horse riding) helmets for daily use** (in relation to EN1384:1996);
- **Impact protection helmets for young children** (in relation to EN 1080:1997).

The primary purpose of the Joint Action is **to ensure that helmets** placed on the EU market are safe. **The expected outcome of the project is a significant reduction of the number of non-compliant helmets** on the European Market. This falls in line with the Commission's third main objective for the period 2007-2012, which is "to effectively protect consumers from the serious risks and threats that they cannot tackle as individuals. A high level of protection against these threats is essential to consumer confidence".

In the period January through July 2010 the members of the Joint Action visited shops in their countries and **checked "on the spot"** some of the available **models, looking for** the accuracy of the **marking and the complete mentioning of the instructions**.

More than 350 models of helmets **have been verified** in this way. The inspections showed that **62% of the examined models did not comply** with the standards requirements **for marking and instructions**.

In addition, **40 models were selected** to be sent to an expert laboratory **for full testing** as set out in the standard. These tests covered the following parameters: **field of vision** (good



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visibility when the helmet is worn), **shock absorbing capacity, durability, suitability of retention system** and others.

The **preliminary results** of the recently concluded tests revealed that **nearly half of the tested models did not comply** with the relevant standard for one or more significant parameters.

In an attempt to step up the enquiry, each Market Surveillance Authority will be communicating any action taken within its country to other Member State Authorities. This will ensure that the information and experience that has been expertly gathered, receives the widest possible circulation within Europe, and that those products which pose a serious risk are promptly removed from the European markets.

A conference will be held on November 15th at PROSAFE Headquarters in Brussels to discuss these issues and to present the findings of the Joint Action.

Through this joint market surveillance exercise, **it is expected that the results and the experience gathered from the sampling and testing**, including identified **best practices**, will be **disseminated amongst all the Joint Action participating bodies**, the market surveillance members from other European countries **and the relevant stakeholders**.

To conclude, the main deliverable of the project is intended to **bring about a significant reduction** in the amount of **unsafe helmets** on the European Union market.