Mountain bike specific helmets on the rise

By Aaron Gulley, Outside

After years of chasing the lightest, most minimal shapes for cross-country riders, helmet companies have started building lids with more rear coverage and added safety features.

Bell wasn’t the first into this space, but it made a splash with the launch of its Super two years ago. This year, BRG Sports, owner of Bell and Giro, has pushed to equip many of its helmets with MIPS—a thin plastic sheath in the helmet that allows the shell to move independently of the head, thus absorbing up to 50 percent of the rotational forces in a crash— after the company purchased a stake in the technology.

But are these helmets really safer or is it all just marketing hoopla?

There’s no clear-cut answer to that question, because the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) testing used since 1998 in the U.S. is a pass-fail standard. Consumers have no way of appraising claims about increased coverage, oblique strikes, or the forces that a helmet absorbs and transfers to riders.

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