

APPAREL PRO: OFF-ROAD HELMETS

When I first moved to Southern California three years ago, I was astonished to see that an entire OHV culture existed beyond anything I could have possibly imagined. Coming from New England, where space is limited and the weather is gloomy, SoCal living was a revelation to me. Friday afternoons I'd see lines of traffic heading away from the LA metro area, many hauling fifth wheel rigs, toy haulers and trailers full of two- and four-wheeled fun.

At Ocotillo Wells, where we like to go on weekends, I'm seeing a shift in the players toward more and more family-oriented. There's been a change in the definition of what off-roading means to enthusiasts. I used to see large groups of quads and dirt bikes and now I'm seeing a lot more ATV/UTVs full of parents and kids all geared up. I'm also seeing all different types of protective apparel, particularly helmets. This is being reflected at the apparel manufacturer level as well.

"The traditional customer going to buy a dirt helmet, well, these days it depends on what vehicle they're driving. It could be a three quarter helmet, half helmet, full face, modular or dirt helmet," said Edward Wilkinson, director of development at Scorpion Sports. "We're seeing the off-road market buy full-face helmets, we're seeing the off-road market buy modular helmets, and there's still a few people wearing dirt helmets. This whole side-by-side market is very strong and it's in some ways new territory."

Fulmer Powersports is expanding its line and re-doing all its graphics for 2017. Youth helmets are taking off for Fulmer, and the company's sub \$100 Compass helmet is getting all new graphics for 2017 as well. Fulmer also reworked the Zen helmets, which is a better quality, higher-end helmet that's very comfortable. There are nine different graphics for the Zen. The Fulmer Edge is an extremely popular helmet as well, with 10 new very sharp graphics.

"Youth helmets have always been a strength at Fulmer," said Mike Messenger, national sales manager for Fulmer Powersports. "We want to continue that strength with two different price points and great options for dealers." And on the opposite end of the spectrum is the Camo helmet, Fulmer's SNELL-rated helmet that will come in 3x and 4X sizes. They expect these helmets to do very well.

Both Fulmer and Scorpion are seeing large growth in off-road helmet sales even as the types of vehicles that people are using off-road, as well as the helmets they use, are changing. Families are getting together to ride and socialize on the weekends and get away from their normal daily routines, and that means new apparel for growing bodies every couple of seasons. Off-road helmet sales are worth paying special attention to right now in your dealership as we head into spring.

"Off-road is one of the segments experiencing solid growth for us right now. It's good for the industry overall," added Wilkinson. "Any time you can get kids out of the house, away from their video games, and onto an ATV, UTV or dirt bike it's good for the industry." Amen to that. ↙



Fulmer Powersports is expanding its off-road helmet line and re-doing graphics for 2017. According to Fulmer, youth helmets, and specifically off-road styles are seeing a lot of growth recently.