

CERT Helmet Alternatives

By: William P. Flinn

I'm a Member/Instructor with the Fort Collins Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). As part of my CERT gear, I wanted a comfortable helmet that would provide excellent bump protection and was more flexible in its ability to allow for attaching hands-free lighting, cameras, night vision, and other accessories. I also wanted a helmet that would allow me to wear my electronic hearing protection, which is also capable of giving me greater listening abilities. This rig doesn't break the bank, and I feel is a much more useful setup for CERT purposes than the standard CERT issued helmet.

This is the standard CERT helmet that is issued when new members receive their initial training and basic CERT gear. This helmet does not come with a chin strap, and is a bit uncomfortable. It also does not allow you to easily mount lights or other equipment:



The helmet that I chose to replace the standard CERT helmet is a Lancer Tactical CA-806B Maritime ABS Helmet. It does not provide ballistic protection, but provides excellent bump protection and a good chin strap. The helmet is much more comfortable than the standard CERT helmet. I didn't feel that spending \$400 on an OpsCore helmet was warranted. I just hope I won't be shot at while doing search and rescue. This helmet costs less than \$60 on Amazon:



Properly documenting a scene, or recording training exercises is important to me. I mounted a Polaroid Cube+ in a waterproof case. While I don't plan on being 30 meters under water during a search and rescue, this case also provides excellent camera protection from other hazards. This camera comes with many accessories and mounts. This particular mount was made especially for mounting into a helmet NVG shroud. The video and audio quality are excellent, and at a fraction of the price (and size) of a GoPro:



One of the things we teach in search and rescue is to stop periodically and listen for movement, voices, or other signs of life in the area being searched. Unfortunately, 20 years of working on jet aircraft, and being on Navy aircraft carriers, not to mention lots of rock concerts as a kid, have given me a world class case of tinnitus. All I hear normally is very loud buzzing in my ears. But this helmet allows me to wear my electronic shooting ear pro, which has very good and crisp audio amplification, and helps compensate for my hearing issues caused by the tinnitus. If I put them on upstairs in my house, I can hear what's going on downstairs in the kitchen. This ear pro sort of has a "white noise" thing going on, which calms my tinnitus quite a bit. And if there are any sudden loud noises, this ear pro greatly reduces the noise. This model was, after all, made for shooting and loud sporting events:



The illuminator on this side of the helmet is a Sightmark IR-805 Compact Infrared Illuminator Flashlight. I use this when wearing my night vision ([which you can see in this article](#)). If there is little or no ambient light, this illuminator will illuminate the area with IR (not white light) so that I can see with the NVGs. I could use a regular flashlight to illuminate the area, but sometimes that is not practical, as it greatly interferes with other people's regular vision in the dark:



I want to be able to be seen by the rest of the search team in a dark building. The light on top is an OSdream VLA v-lite Helmet Fluorescent Light Rods/Camping Survival Light/Flashing Light Lamp (green). They come in multiple colors, but I chose green for the CERT role. You'll also notice the white stripes around the helmet - those are 1/4" reflective tape strips:



These helmets come with lots of Velcro. Comes in handy for identification patches, name tapes, and other goodies. The fluorescent light on top mounts with Velcro also:



The flashlight on this side of the helmet is a 350 lumen tactical weapons light, mounted on one of the rails that mounts on this helmet:



Not shown here, but even with the helmet and my ear pro, this setup allows me to wear a wide variety of eye protection easily and comfortably. You'll also notice the relative size of the other equipment on the helmet. This is still a very compact setup, which presents minimal catch or "bump" hazards that would cause equipment to get knocked off of the helmet:



Looks like a lot of stuff. But it's not heavy or bulky at all, and very comfortable to wear:



If I get seriously injured in a search and rescue, I want the people helping me to be able to help me quickly. I carry my personal first aid kit with me at all times, plus other medical equipment. But I also have my blood type on my helmet and elsewhere on my gear:



This pouch is normally used as a counter-weight when wearing NVGs so as to balance the weight of the helmet. But when I'm not wearing the NVGs, I take out the weights and put in CR-123 batteries so as to have spares for my lights and other equipment.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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