

Product Update: Veskimo Personal Cooling System



review by Gary Prickett



Left: Veskimo is now offering 4.4-qt. and 9-qt. (shown) auxiliary coolers to enhance its Personal Cooling System for extended comfort on longer rides. Right: Like the original backpack-mounted ice carrier, they attach to the Veskimo vest via quick-disconnect hoses.

MCN READERS MIGHT recall that we previously featured the Veskimo Personal Cooling System as an Innovation of the Month in our September 2008 issue. At the time, we praised this easy-to-wear and easy-to-use portable cooling system for its ability to keep motorcyclists comfortable in extreme heat and/or oppressive humidity.

For MCN readers new to the product, the Veskimo uses a cooling technology introduced for the first astronauts back in the Sixties that has since been employed by the Armed Forces as well as racecar drivers from F1 to NASCAR: A mesh nylon vest that can be worn under protective gear plumbed with a continuous loop of small diameter tubing (50' of 1/8" tubing in the Veskimo unit) supplied with cold water circulated by a pump. In the case of race drivers, the supply of cold water is generally provided by a refrigeration unit, but since space is at a premium in a motorcycle application, Veskimo uses ice to provide the cold water. The version we tested in 2008 used a modified 3-qt. Camelbak Hydration Pack as a reservoir, and we praised its ability to greatly reduce a rider's body's core temperature in hot weather, thus reducing discomfort and potential heat stroke.

While we didn't find that first Veskimo system to be uncomfortably heavy, Veskimo has since come up with a method to increase its cooling capacity and reduce the weight carried by the rider's back. Its new system uses a cooler that can be strapped to the rear seat or luggage rack of your motorcycle. Available in 4.4-qt. and 9-qt. sizes, the cooler consists of two parts: a hard plastic container with a removable top that holds the ice, and an insulated ballistic nylon zippered cover that incorporates a carrying handle, shoulder strap and two external pockets. For our testing, we used a pair of Rok Straps in an "X" pattern to hold the 9-quart Veskimo cooler in place on our BMW F650GS test bike.

The cooler incorporates an electric pump which can be operated by either an integrated AA-battery pack or a cable plugged into a motorcycle's 12V power outlet. The liquid connection between the vest and cooler is handled by 3.5' of larger tubing with quick-connect fittings to make for easy connection and disconnection when mounting and dismounting the bike.

We found that in order to maintain the maximum cooling capability for the longest possible time, we needed to use the largest ice cubes possible. (A block of ice will take longer to melt than its equivalent weight in ice cubes.) To create the optimum-size blocks, we bought a set of four Rubbermaid "TakeAlongs" at a local grocery store, and used these reusable plastic containers as ice forms. With four of these mini-ice blocks plus three refrigerator trays of ice cubes and 1 pint of ice water to prime the pump, the cooler was filled to capacity, and we set off on a hot ride through the desert.

The resulting cooling action lasted for five hours during an otherwise very hot tour when the ambient temperature on the floor of the Anza Borrego Desert reached 103 ° F. During the testing, the vest was worn under a closed Aerostich Darien jacket, and we found that reducing the inflow of hot ambient air helped. Even after the ice had melted, the residual cold water continued to provide a diminishing cooling effect for about another hour. Of course, if more cooling time is needed, simply dumping the warm water out of the cooler and refilling it with ice from a convenience store will get you several more hours of cooling, depending on the size of the ice cubes.

The Veskimo Cooling System provides an effective means for motorcyclists to ride in very hot weather while significantly lessening the debilitating and potentially dangerous effects of prolonged exposure to heat. And, unlike evaporative systems, it does not require low humidity to work. The only potential downside is that the rider is essentially tethered to the motorcycle by the water circulation tubing. This could present a problem in the event of an unintended get-off, but we feel that the benefits far outweigh those risks, and we award the Veskimo system a full five out of five dots. The Veskimo vest, available in sizes S-XL, is \$129. The 3-qt. backpack is an additional \$239. The 4.4-qt. cooler is \$149, and the 9-qt. cooler is \$169. ■

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