

## A Tale of Two Mirrors

by Karen Brooks

Helmet mirrors may mark you as the ultimate Fred, but they do help you keep aware in traffic. Here are two mirrors from folks who care about safety enough to go out of their way to produce them.

HubBub Custom Bicycles is a combination brick-and-mortar and online bike shop based near Cleveland, Ohio. Co-owner Diane Lees also produces a weekly radio show and podcast called The Outspoken Cyclist, and wrote a book on touring advice, *The HubBub Guide to Cycling*. This helmet mirror is one of two HubBub branded products available from the shop, and Lees says it's the coolest mirror available.

Brett Flemming of Efficient Velo Tools focuses his energy on making superior bike tools. He is also an advocate of helmet mirrors and was inspired to make one for himself using the Loc-Line brand modular hose found on his lathe's cutting tool. The prototype mirror found its way into production, and Flemming claims it's the best helmet mirror on the market.

**HubBub (A)**- \$29 - [hubbubcustom.com](http://hubbubcustom.com)

The mount for this mirror is ingeniously simple: a steel wire frame (of the same type used in DT spokes), hand-dipped in vinyl, grips the front edge of your helmet. I was able to fit it on a standard roadie-style helmet with lots of vents and a visor, and on a Lazer Urbanize helmet with a funky built-in visor. It will also work on brainbucket-style helmets, such as those made by Nutcase and Bern.

The glass surface is quite large, 2" across, which took some getting

used to, but the mirror is positioned up and to the side enough so that it didn't obstruct my forward view. It took some time bending and squeezing with hands and pliers to get the fit and position exactly right, but then the mirror stays put and hardly jiggles on rough roads. I could also remove it to stuff my helmet in a bag, or un-Fred to fit in with the cool kids.

**Safe Zone (B)**- \$40 - [www.safezonemirror.com](http://www.safezonemirror.com)

This is another large mirror, at 2-1/4" across. It is anchored by a long, thin plastic plate that attaches to one of your helmet's "ribs" between the vents with included zip-ties. The directions warn that zip ties can eventually compromise your helmet by cutting into the foam, so I opted instead to use a couple of small Velcro straps I had lying around. It would be nice to see the mirror come with such straps. One drawback is that the mount only works on helmets with vents.

From the plate, a length of Loc-Line hose made up of individual ball-joint segments connects the mirror. The hose can be easily manipulated to position the mirror, and can be shortened by removing segments, but it stays absolutely still even over rough stuff. I was easily able to position the mirror so that it didn't obstruct my forward view, and reposition it mid-ride, if necessary.

### Conclusion

Neither of these is cheap, but in my opinion, a solid, effective mirror is well worth it for safety. I prefer the larger size of both to smaller mirrors I've tried. Your choice between the two depends on your helmet style, and whether you'd want to swap the mirror between helmets. Both mirrors are made in the U.S.A. and are warranted for five years.



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## VITAband

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The VITAband is a high-tech version of an ID bracelet, offering not just personal info but the capability to buy things with a pre-paid chip. For the emergency info functionality, you enter your Emergency Response Profile details at the company's secure website. Emergency responders call the phone number on the bracelet and relay the unique ID number to access your info. Some EMTs would prefer the info printed right there, but this call-in function gives access to such important data as health insurance details and a list of your prescriptions.

For the high-tech money part, you apply for a Visa brand Prepaid Chip and Card combo, and then load anywhere from \$20 to \$500 onto it. Here, banks get involved and so things get complicated, what with applications and lengthy terms agreements, but having scrutinized the fine print, the pre-paid card deal offered through VITAband's bank seems fair. There are no fees to load money onto the chip or to pay for things with it. The chip works at retailers offering contactless payments—a swipe thingy on the counter that you wave the bracelet in front of to pay. These are few and far between in my typical snack stops, but there is a growing list of national chains that use this payment form. Supposedly it's the wave of the future.

Including a one-year subscription to the Emergency Response Profile service, the bracelet costs \$35, and comes in two sizes and several colors. It is similar to the ubiquitous Livestrong and other "cause" bracelets, and seems to be holding up just fine. Renewal of the Profile service is \$15 per year. This type of safety measure makes a whole lot of sense, particularly for those with special medical needs or when you're riding alone or far from home. [www.vitaband.net](http://www.vitaband.net)

