

Schenectady startup raises \$1.5 million to keep motorcyclists safe on the roads

By Chelsea Diana - Reporter,
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Kirsh Helmets, a Schenectady, New York, startup that's developing a safer motorcycle helmet, has raised more than \$1.5 million.

In the latest fundraising round, Kirsh raised \$500,000 from existing and new investors. The company previously raised \$1 million last year. Investors include Square Peg Ventures, an early stage fund by Eric Leander and Matt Wagoner of The Wagoner Firm PLLC.



Eric Leander, an attorney at The Wagoner Firm in Albany, was among the investors in the company through his new early stage capital firm, Square Peg Ventures. COURTESY OF THE WAGONER FIRM

The latest investment will let Kirsh Helmets commercialize its half-shell helmet and start design work on its three-quarters helmet. The three-quarters helmet will be an entryway into a global market.

Kirsh Helmets was started by Jason Kirshon in 2017. Kirshon spent almost a decade perfecting a new technology that would replace traditional styrofoam helmets.



To prepare for that growth, the company moved into the New York BizLab accelerator in Schenectady.

PHOTOGRAPHER: DONNA ABBOTT-VLAHOS

Donald DeVito joined in 2017 as president and chief operating officer of Kirsh Helmets after meeting Kirshon at a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute event.

Together they have been building a business that offers a safer and more stylish alternative to the average motorcycle helmet. Kirsh's motorcycle helmet uses silicone to reduce impact. Kirshon says the silicone liner helps reduce impact by up to 60 percent over the helmets used today with polystyrene "EPS" foam.

In October, the company hired former Harley-Davidson executive Steve Piehl to lead the startup company's corporate strategy development. In all, Kirsh Helmets

Kirsh Helmets, a Schenectady startup that's developing a safer motorcycle helmet, has raised more than \$1.5 million. (Pictured: CEO and founder Jason Kirshon, left, and president and COO Donald DeVito.)

PHOTOGRAPHER: Chelsea Diana

has six employees.

Kirsh Helmets works out of the New York BizLab accelerator in Schenectady, where they have met many of their investors through the BizLab's Virtual Fund, a network of potential investors that hears pitches from local companies.

Kirsh Helmets manufactures the helmets locally. The company works with Specialty Silicone Products in Ballston Spa on manufacturing the silicone liner. Cavallero Plastics Inc. in Pittsfield is doing the injected molds. Breton Industries in Amsterdam is making the chin straps, and Coarc Manufacturing in Hudson is assembling the helmet.

The first helmet, the half shell, costs \$245 and will be sold direct to consumers online as well as at motorcycle rallies and other events.