

GEARLAB

Silver Eagle Cooling Vest

FOR 25 YEARS I HAVE BEEN PROMOTING THE USE OF ELECTRICALLY HEATED VESTS TO KEEP WARM IN THE COLD. AND NOW I AM GOING TO START PROMOTING THE USE OF COOLING VESTS TO KEEP COOL IN THE HEAT. THIS SILVER EAGLE CLASSIC WATER-ACTIVATED EVAPORATIVE COOLING VEST IS THE FIRST ONE I'VE TRIED, AND IT WORKS GREAT.

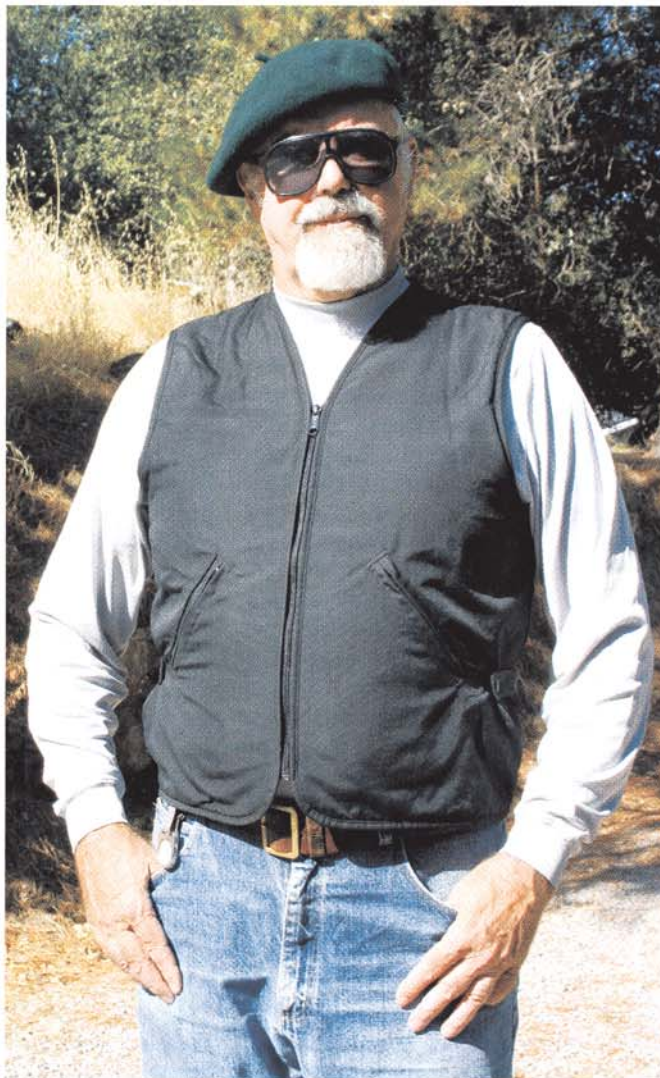
I was headed across the Great Basin this past July, which is not a good month to be traveling in Nevada and Western Utah; the temperature tends to be extremely hot. I had heard about these cooling vests, but never tried one; I ordered up an XL. The directions say that for optimum use the vest should be soaked in its bag in the recommended 22 ounces of water. I used a measuring cup, poured it in, and 15 minutes later the vest had absorbed all of it. I headed off with the thermometer reading 95 degrees; two hours later, passing Bakersfield, California, it had reached 108 degrees—I know this because the Gold Wing had an ambient-air thermometer.

The vest worked great. I wore it beneath a light jacket with vents, and it served to cool me for a good two hours at a time. I would stop, drink a lot of fluids (very, very important in hot weather), resoak the vest in a sink, and continue on. That 22 ounces is precision measuring, but you can also soak it, wring out the excess, and carry on. Day two was also above 100 degrees, but the vest kept me acceptably comfortable.

Reading the paperwork that comes with the vest, I see it has three layers of fabric, including a DuPont Cordura outer shell—that material seems to be in nearly all man-made motorcycle clothing. And a DuPont Teflon HT moisture barrier on the inside. In between are “hydrophilic and hydrophobic fibers that absorb, trap and distribute the optimal amount of water....” All I can say is that the vest works, even after hosing it down at Black Rock Station along U.S. 6 in Nevada, where it was very, very hot.

The vest comes in two different cuts, for men and for women, sizes from S-4XL, and costs \$95. Well worth it if you are going to do any seriously hot-weather riding.

I wore the Cooling Vest over a Cruiserworks Coolrider Powerwick Mock Turtleneck shirt that is made of some other semi-miraculous polyester fiber that is cooler than cotton. A “performance fabric” with “accelerated wicking action,” as the brochure says; it also enjoys good loft, which means it is not going to stick to your skin. The combination worked to my satisfaction.



Men's Coolrider shirts comes in sizes M-3XL in five color choices, and women's sizes S-XL in three color choices, for \$46.95. Short-sleeved versions are available for \$34.95. **Clement Salvadori**

For more information:

Silver Eagle Outfitters, 917 Willowbrook Drive, Huntsville, Alabama 35802; (888) 672-6963; www.coolingapparel.com

Cruiserworks, 505-C Cornerstone Court, Hillsborough, North Carolina 27278; (800) 955-1187; www.cruiserworks.com