

Cygolite Shines!

By Marc Zingarelli, EMSCI ##179

Circleville Fire Department (OH)

I have a few rules in life relating to things I believe I'll never do, and the problem with setting rules like this is that I eventually have to break one. Just recently I broke two of those rules at the same time.

I've been searching for the perfect headlight setup for my patrol bike. My criteria were simple. I wanted a light that would safely illuminate a road for eight hours. Most of my personal bicycles are equipped with wheel or hub dynos (generators), and I usually also carry a halogen lamp for those real dark areas. The reason is simple. Battery life! Halogens eat batteries and when you ride for hours in the dark, you can't rely on simple light packages to provide hours of uninterrupted, high-output light; hence the two-light combination. The problem with this approach is that it is not a simple solution for bike patrol lighting and it makes you rely on two different systems.

I investigated a wide variety of products. I considered every light I knew of and even considered a Shimano Dyno Hub for unlimited power. Most people I consulted advised me to check out the various LED lights, but I was skeptical. Don't get me wrong – I love LEDs and think they are very useful. But most of the ones I had seen did not have a good beam (either too fuzzy or too narrow) or they didn't have the brightness we require. And so it was that I broke my first rule: "LED's will never be used alone."

While looking at all my pure halogen options, I discovered many interesting choices that might have made the cut if I hadn't been pinned to the floor with sticker shock. Thankfully, I decided to visit one more web site – Cygolite. A few years ago when the price of a single 10w halogen light was as high as \$200, Cygolite came up with an innovative solution. They used two 6w bulbs aimed at different angles to provide the same beam while allowing you to ration power by shutting a bulb down. The real kicker was that the whole setup cost less than \$100, and it is still being sold, now for around \$50.

Imagine my surprise when I saw that they had an all LED light with a claimed output equal to a 20w halogen, with a nine-hour runtime and a price under \$200. It was then that that I broke my second rule: "Never buy anything that hasn't been reviewed thoroughly by at least three trusted sources." I ordered it "sight unseen" and immediately after I clicked the "confirm order" button, I wondered if I had lost my mind.

Two days later, my Cygolite Dual-Cross 300 arrived and I was prepared to be disappointed. How wrong I was! The first thing I did was plug in the battery on the rapid charger. The instructions said it would take four hours, and it was close. While waiting on the battery to charge, I started mounting things. I like the mount, a quick-release which allows for instant placement, removal and adjustment. The cool thing is that it also rotates. So no matter where you place it on your bars, or if your bar isn't flat, you simply rotate it clockwise or counter-clockwise until the light sits level and your beam is properly placed. The next thing I liked was the battery. It doesn't use a water bottle cage; instead, it uses Velcro straps and non-slip foam to secure it to one of the bike tubes (I picked the down tube so it wouldn't interfere with cables). My friends in Shreveport, LA, would love this as they need two water bottles in their cages in that heat! But would it stay put? I rode around in the daytime with it, went down some stairs and curbs, and rode a little off-road. The battery stayed secure, so the only thing left was the night test.

As I mentioned earlier, this is a pure LED light. One of the issues I have with strong LED's is the narrow beam. Cygolite overcame this by using two bulbs aimed differently to create one great beam. The company's literature says that their "Exclusive Crossfire™ projection crosses the beams, maximizing ground coverage and visibility." Note – for this reason, you cannot turn one light off and run it as a single.

The first test after reading the directions (which is a must for this light) was brightness. I turned on my 10w halogen helmet lamp. I then turned the Dual-Cross 300 onto its low setting and found the beam to be just as bright, but with a much whiter light. I turned it up through its settings, and it was easily much brighter than the 10w halogen. The literature claimed that the light would last nine hours on the low setting and four hours on the high. During a six-hour shift, I never ran out of light and never turned it off, though I saved the high setting for when I was actually moving. The light's low battery indicator did not light up during the shift, so it must have had plenty of juice left.

Another interesting aspect of this light is that it flashes. There is a slow flash, a strobe flash, an S.O.S. flash and a walk mode. Walk mode is the most fascinating of the flash modes because it does not actually flash. Rather, it is an ultra low power steady mode. In walk mode, the Dual-Cross 300 is as bright as most good LED lights that you can find for under \$50, and the manufacturer claims that the battery will last for 60 hours! I can see many uses for walk mode, such as when you are parked or otherwise off your bike, or in well-lit areas in which you have no problems seeing but need to be seen by other vehicles. It could also be great in the daytime on a rainy or foggy day.

I have used this light for several events and I like it more each time. To say I'm amazed by this light is an understatement. I'm sold on it. The light output and the price are a great combination and if you're looking for a lighting system that will last your whole shift, I urge you to check it out at www.cygolite.com.

Lt. Marc Zingarelli is the Bike Patrol and Continuing Education coordinator for the Circleville Fire Department in Circleville, Ohio. He is a life member of the Adventure Cycling Association, and an avid all weather bike commuter who can be found traveling on a bike almost anywhere year round. He can be reached at marcing@earthlink.net.

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