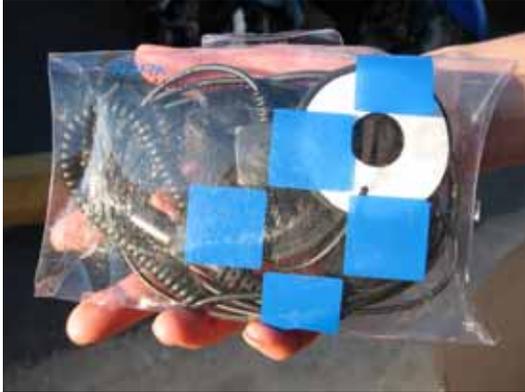


Staying in touch....

Tested: Tork Motorcycle Communicators



You want to buy a bike-to-bike communication system but you don't want to spend hundreds of dollars on a setup, so what do you do? Bikeland tried out the latest offering for communications manufacturer Tork, and this is what we found....

Tork has a cool take on the whole bike to bike communication issue - instead of building an entire system including their own radio like HJC Chatterbox does, Tork has concentrated on building a robust communications harness and left the FRS radios to the experts. Tork has designed their speaker and microphone harnesses to be compatible with Motorola's Talkabout FRS radio system, readily available at almost any electronic store - or even any grocery store or pharmacy. With the purchase of an additional \$9 adapter the Tork can be fitted to work with about 90 % of FRS radios from any manufacturer on the market today.

Tork offers three versions of their communicator system: the Tork Sport for full-face helmets, the Tork Touring for ¾ open-face helmets, and the Tork Cruiser for beanie style helmets.

Bikeland tested the Tork Sport. The upside of the Tork setup is that it's small, and more importantly it's inexpensive. The Tork Sport's MSRP is \$49.00, but you can find it online for less through other retailers. You supply the radios and Tork gives you the rest.

The Tork Sport's wiring harness is considerably stronger than the Chatterbox's. This was our major complaint with Chatterbox in our January 2006 review - their wires are hair thin and the connectors are flimsy. The Tork system utilizes a nicely machined and

anodized DIN connector and a bonus is that the Tork push-to-talk button is wafer thin.

Installing the Tork system in your riding gear is pretty much the same as with the Chatterbox. Mount the speakers and microphone in your helmet and you're ready to communicate. Location of the radio itself was an issue for us. Since it doesn't mount to your helmet, you have to put it somewhere. We're not big fans of keeping anything directly on our bodies when we ride; hard things in pockets close to bones have the potential to cause a lot of pain in a crash, so opting to locate the radio in a tank bag or somewhere else off-body would be wise.

The Tork Sport was lacking in any sort of auxiliary inputs so you're SOL if you want to hook up something external like an MP3 player or audio from a radar detector. To solve this we carved up our unit (not recommended) and grafted a Tork X3 MP3 player helmet speaker kit into our harness so that we could hear our radar detector. The X3 kit is top of the line and has a volume control located on the cable itself so you don't have to reach down to your player to adjust the sound level.

We tested the Tork Sport back to back with the Chatterbox FRS-X2 and the Chatterbox Multi-Sport+. Both Chatterbox units cost considerably more than their Tork counterpart. The bare bones Chatterbox Multi-Sport+ will set you back \$199.95, and that only gets you one unit. Compare this to the Tork system; if you go 3rd party and purchase your Tork headsets from a retailer such as www.bikeintercom.com the Tork will only cost you \$39.99. A pair of Motorola Talkabouts start at \$58.64 from your local Walmart.



Here's a ghetto math example equipping two riders with both systems (not including shipping or taxes etc etc)...

Basic Chatterbox Setup

Chatterbox Multi-Sport+ @ \$199.99 x 2

Total Cost: \$399.98

Basic Tork Setup

Pair of Motorola Talkabouts from Walmart @ \$58.64

Tork Sport @ \$39.99 x 2 = \$79.98

Total Cost: \$138.62

Using the Tork communicators provided mixed results. The sound quality of the Tork Sport was every bit as clear and loud as the Chatterbox below 65 mph, but during our testing above 65mph both Chatterbox systems beat the Tork for audio quality. In our opinion this doesn't mean much for everyday around town riding, and especially dual sport riding or anything like that. Tork insists that they haven't experienced the sound quality issues that we did at higher speeds so to give them the benefit of the doubt we're going to retest with new units and we'll update this story with our findings.

In the mean time the easy answer is this: If you're looking at a communication's setup for your bike and you don't plan on traveling at warp 9 while talking to your buddy, then the Tork is for you. You simply can't beat the build quality for the price. Further, if you're doing any dirt or dual sport riding then the Tork is definitely the ticket. There's nothing bulky (ie: Chatterbox) hanging off your helmet, it's economical, it's well made, and it's cheap enough that you could easily outfit your whole riding group for a fraction of the cost of a Chatterbox system.

For more information about Tork and their products visit them at www.torkworld.com . To order their stuff at a slightly lower price check out www.bikeintercom.com .

Photos top to bottom...

-Tork push to talk (left) vs Chatterbox (right)

-Tork machined DIN connector

-DIN connector showing threaded locking mechanism

-Thickness of helmet speaker (Tork Sport)

