

## Cycle Siren Clears the Way: Cutting through the Carnival

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Bike patrolling in large crowds presents several unique challenges. One of these is getting the attention and cooperation of pedestrians when you have to get through a crowd quickly in an emergency situation. Most light and warning packages designed for bike patrol aren't designed for these circumstances. Pedestrians in a crowd often can't see you until you are less than 10 feet behind them, and lights that are visible at several blocks are below their line of sight at these close distances. Trying to get recognized as a police officer or paramedic wastes time and is often an exercise in futility and physical (and mental) exertion.

I was looking for a replacement for the battery-powered xenon strobe system on my bike when I stumbled across CycleSiren's EMS Mini-Siren. The EMS Mini-Siren is an LED strobe package combined with a mini-siren designed for bike patrol. LEDs have come into vogue in warning packages for motorized vehicles because they don't use as much power as strobes. This was very appealing because my existing system went through AA batteries at a rapid rate and the horn I was using was sometimes confused for a kid with a whistle.

I was a little dubious when I opened the box. Inside was a small square covered with LEDs, a small siren, a charger and a battery that looked identical to the one in my son's remote control car. How could something this small put out enough light or noise to move the large crowd at our annual festival? How wrong I was. The LEDs and siren mount separately but are connected by a single cable. The light and siren controls are mounted on the siren and there is a remote horn switch on another cable. After charging the battery and mounting the lights, siren and remote horn switch to the bike, I gave it a try. The LEDs were very bright, even on a bright sunny day, and on par with most automotive LED packages. At night, they were just as good – if not better – than automotive LEDs. The siren was loud at a published 115db, and the electric air horn was a bonus. The great news is that the battery is identical to one used in a remote controlled car with a standard Molex connector and is available for less than \$20 at a local electronics store (\$19.99 if you want one with a charger). If you've had to buy proprietary batteries for one of the other light systems out there, I'm sure you'll have no problem seeing the advantage in this.

The big test was the annual Circleville Pumpkin Show, when our city of 12,000 attracts up to 100,000 people per day in an eight-block area. The bike medics – equipped with the new lights – patrolled both in the crowd and in the alleys between the blocks. Reports from riders, the public and other members of the department were very positive. People were able to see the LEDs very well from varying distances and in varying light conditions *and* they were able to identify the bikes as emergency units. The horn was perfect for the alleys, where there are few pedestrians, while the siren was deemed to work well in the crowd and be distinguishable from other sounds in the carnival atmosphere (although the horn could also be used). The siren-mounted control was adequate for EMS bikes as we could turn the siren on and not worry about it while our hands were free to control a loaded bike. The battery never ran out during a 12-hour shift and recharging was done during an eight hour off-duty period.

One of the questions we had was just how waterproof the EMS Mini-Siren is. While the battery connector doesn't appear to be very weatherproof, 12 hours in rainy weather didn't present any problems. While the eight-hour charger really didn't hurt our operations, I'm sure someone out there makes a fast charger that fits these batteries if you need to charge them fast. Of course, at their cheap price, you could also buy a second battery and have one ready to go at all times. *Note from the manufacturer: CycleSiren offers a fast charger for the RC 9.6 volt Ni-HM battery that will charge the battery in 70 minutes or less. The charger operates on 110 to 220 volts AC input (220 volts for UK customers). As for how waterproof the system is, as long as you don't drop your bike into a swimming pool, the siren will be OK.*

CycleSiren makes a variety of products, including an integrated taillight that is just as bright as the front light. I intend to add to this to my current package. They also have other light/siren systems available with varied controls and lights, including the CycleSiren Trooper Mini-Siren, Patrol Mini-Siren, and the Enforcer for police use. More information on CycleSiren can be found at <http://www.cyclesiren.com>. CycleSiren participates in the IPMBA Product Purchase Program.

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