



Continuing the Little League tradition of making it "safer for the kids."

Making It Safer

Safety Effort Takes Effort

Virginia leads way by helping leagues develop safety plans

At the 22nd International Congress in April, district administrators were given additional information on ASAP's progress and positive impact on Little League in reducing injuries and insurance costs since its start in 1995. They were also shown how important the district safety officer can be in raising safety awareness in their districts. In this issue, Lee Joyce, state safety director for Virginia — the leading state in the country, speaks about the role of the district safety officer. Leagues are urged to make use of the district staff, especially the safety officer, in developing and maintaining their safety plans.

"My feeling is the district safety officer needs to be in a position to give information to the league safety officer," asserted Joyce, who is also the Va. District 7 safety officer. He thinks the DSO needs to be in good communication with Little League Headquarters as well as the leagues they support in all aspects of the safety program in order to be effective.

To help his leagues meet the requirements on training, his district offers four different sports injury prevention/first aid classes — using the Emergency Management Training Program — in different areas of the district. "This year we had 385 people attend; we have an orthopaedic surgeon and a physical therapist/trainer go through warm-up exercises, stretching, sliding and actual X-rays of case examples."

Joyce gets feedback from both the doctor and physical

therapist as well as the participants on where improvements can be made: "So far, we seem to be doing well."

Getting leagues involved from the start is key to his approach, with a meeting during the traditional fall "off-

season" to get people thinking about Little League and safety.

"We start off in the fall with a general meeting of safety officers, and I tell them what I expect from them and what they can expect from me," Joyce explained. After that, a monthly meeting with his district's league safety officers allows him to relay any new safety information as well as help them develop their safety programs.

"At each monthly meeting, I'll go over a

particular safety topic," he said, such as concession stand training with the health department, fire extinguisher safety with the fire department, horticultural training on keeping the fields green through their wear and tear, safe use of chemicals and the harmful effects of tobacco products.

In the spring, Joyce visits each league to help them conduct their facility survey and look over their fields and equipment. "A biggie is checking fire extinguishers which need to be recharged," Joyce noted. "Most of these items aren't 'show-stoppers,' they're just smaller issues like keeping fire extinguishers charged and maintained, proper storage of chemicals, and keeping CO² tanks secured."

"All this is what I feel the safety officer and DSO

Postmark safety plan by June 25 to receive credit

If you haven't submitted your safety plan, you may still have time. The deadline for submitting a qualified safety plan to receive a 10 percent credit on your player accident insurance premium has been extended to June 25. However, all late plans will only be eligible for a 10 percent credit, and will not be considered for the ASAP Best Safety Plan Contest. The credit will be paid to your league in July. Also, all submitted plans must meet the 12 minimum requirements to qualify.

Safety effort ongoing

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should be doing; it's not just during the season, it's something that should be going on year round. It's an on-going process. It's like everything else in life, it all depends on the time and effort you put into it. It can be as elaborate or as simple as you want to make it," he said.

He also visits different league's fields once or twice a week, "just to observe and help raise awareness by reminding people of safety concerns not being followed."

"Some people will say, 'That's a full-time job' and it is, if you're doing it right," he joked. Joyce says he's not out there telling people what to do or what not to do, he's trying to help them learn about safety issues which can prevent injuries and accidents, so they can implement policies and procedures which will provide a better environment for the players and volunteers in the league. "It's a win-win situation. We strive to ensure that District 7 is a safe place to play," he noted

"This year we had 385 people attend (the EMTP); we have a physician and a physical trainer go through warm-up exercises, stretching, sliding and actual X-rays of case examples."

— *Lee Joyce, Virginia state safety director*

Joyce sends material, including safety newsletters, out to both the league president and the league safety officer, "for a parallel path, so everybody's getting the information." As difficult as it can be to get information into the right person's hands, this is important. Because as much as the message is spreading about safety, he notes that much of the time the DSO will need to "do the footwork to take it to them." But he's seen real dividends.

"As a state safety director, I've been going to leagues throughout the state where no safety plan has ever been submitted, showing the benefits of having a safety plan.

"I was called just recently to come to a league to talk about developing a safety plan. They were very interested and I think they will start a safety program. What was significant was that just the day before, at a state meeting, I'd been told that this same league was one I would never get to (develop) a safety plan. So every effort counts.

"If someone has a safety problem or concern, I'm just a phone call away to offer whatever services I can to take care of the situation. I can't promise that I'll have an answer for everything, but I'll do my best to get an answer."

Check your league's safety plan status!

Curious how your district is doing on safety plans? Want to know which of your leagues is eligible to host a tourney by entering a safety plan? Just want to see if your plan has been received at Little League Headquarters, and if so, approved? Now you can!

Little League's web site has been updated to give you this information online.

Go to: <http://www.littleleague.org/plans.asp> and you will see a database access page which allows you to enter any state and district number and see how many leagues submitted safety plans from that district.

District administrators and district safety officers can double-check that Little League received all the plans submitted, and look for any leagues which haven't submitted plans yet. *Remember, leagues have until June 15 to have their qualified safety program postmarked to be eligible for a reduced insurance credit on their player accident insurance premium.*

If the league has a 0% under "Insurance Credit %," the plan has been received, and is being reviewed; if it has a 20%, the plan has been reviewed and is eligible for the full credit. If a plan was received after the May 1 deadline, and meets the minimum requirements after it has been reviewed, it will be given a 10% credit designation. The insurance credit will be made to eligible league's accounts in July.

To date, Little League has received over 2,200 plans, roughly 34%, just over the number of leagues which submitted safety plans last year. However, over 400 leagues submitted a safety plan last year and didn't turn one in this year. If those leagues alone submitted their plans by the extended deadline, the total would be close to 40% nationwide, a great stride in safety for all participating kids and volunteers in Little League Baseball.

Safety officer email server lets you 'talk' to other SO's

Lee Joyce also maintains a safety officer email server which allows safety officers across the country to email each other questions, seek assistance and get feedback. If you or others in the Little League community would like to join, go to www.dpll.org/safetyform.htm to register.

Lighting guidelines

As you head into tournament time, one of the overlooked areas may be lighting audits for your tourney fields. According to the Little League Operating Manual, lights on fields which have night games must be checked and a Lighting Safety Audit performed prior to the start of the season as well as prior to tournament play each year, to ensure the lights meet Little League Standards. A copy of this audit must be submitted to your DA. Check the Operating Manual for details, but here's some key points:

Lighting

Lighting is measured in both quantity and quality. Little League standards call for 50 footcandles infield and 30 footcandles outfield (maintained). Lamps will naturally depreciate with time, so initial light levels will be higher until the lamps have "burned in" on a new system.

The smoothness, or uniformity, of the lighting is also important, so the standards call for 2.01:1 uniformity on the infield and 2.5:1 uniformity on the outfield. This is a ratio between the lightest and darkest points on the field.

Electrical

Electrical safety includes checking for exposed wires and loose connections on conduit. Machinery can bump electrical conduit connections loose, leaving wires exposed and players at risk. Pull on the conduit to check for looseness and damage and repair accordingly.

Structural

For systems which still have wooden poles, extra attention is required to ensure they won't fail. Wood is subject not only to twisting and misaligning fixtures, but can deteriorate from the elements, insects or woodpeckers. Core testing is a reliable method to determine poles' soundness.

Steel poles should be inspected for rust or corrosion, especially at connections and fasteners. Use binoculars to look at crossarms and their attachments for signs of movement or corrosion. Inspect all exterior conduit. Twisted conduit can be a sign of poles moving, which can misalign fixtures and require fixture reaiming to correct.

Maintenance

Cleaning lenses and reflectors as well as replacing broken lenses will help your field meet standards. Burned out lamps should be replaced, or if your entire field's light levels are low, you might need to replace all the old lamps.

Fuses should be checked and replaced as needed. Fixture housings should show no signs of cracks or leaks.

For more information on lighting standards, contact Little League Headquarters at 570/326-1921.

Question of the Month:

"I have a question about light poles: If a league has a defective wooden light pole, can it be replaced by a wooden pole, or does it have to be replaced by a newer metal one?"

Rick Allison, DSO
West Virginia District 6

Any upgrade made to a league's lighting must result in meeting Little League's lighting standards, which would include ensuring poles are of a non-wood material. Lighting systems installed prior to July 1, 1992 were temporarily "grandfathered" in as long as they continued to meet the existing criteria, with the major consideration being that the lighting meet 30 footcandles in the infield, and 20 footcandles outfield, with a minimum of 26 1500-watt metal halide lamps. All new lighting systems and upgrades since that date have had to meet the new standards for the electrical, structural and lighting requirements. Wood poles have not been allowed for new or upgraded lighting systems since 1994. The lighting itself would need to meet the minimum requirements of 50 footcandles on the infield, and 30 footcandles on the outfield. According to the 2000 Little League Lighting Standards: **"Notice:** Any upgrade or addition of lighting equipment to existing systems after July 1, 1992, must be done so that the systems will be in complete compliance with current standards." (Little League 2001 Operating Manual, page 94.) Check the Operating Manual for information on lighting standards. Another point to remember from the standards: **"The local District Administrator must pre-approve plans for any new lighting system as being adequate and within minimum standards for safe play.** It is recommended that the District Administrator involve the lighting specialist in Williamsport in his/her review." Why must the DA approve plans? Because, again according to the 2001 Operating Manual, page 93, "(t)he District Administrator (and each local Little League President) are directly responsible for ensuring that any fields on which night games are played within his/her league or district are up to these standards. The potential liability risks we all face makes compliance even more imperative." So if you have questions about your lights or new lights you plan to install, Williamsport is your best option to resolve them.

'Are safety railings required?'

Q: "At our last district meeting a question was asked about safety railings on bleacher seats over five rows high. It was pointed out that all new bleachers are required to have side and back rails to prevent someone from falling. However the question that I need answered is should bleachers that have been in use for years, be required to be outfitted with safety rails? The bleachers are not owned by this league. They are the property of this league's city. If they do need to be outfitted with rails, do you have any suggestions on how to do this?"

**Dan Tougas, safety officer
Rhode Island District 4**

A: The answer is likely going to be "yes." Even if you don't own the facilities, unless your community has no local building codes to go by, it is likely that even older bleachers are required to have railings and handrails. Check your local codes on railings to see whether they are required in your area. The ASAP News just covered railings in the March, 2001 issue, where it was mentioned that the Uniform Building Code requires handrails on all bleachers or stands which rise above 36 inches, and guardrails for backs at 42 inches and above. Most bleachers easily surpass these modest heights, so check with your local building officials on local codes and then work with your facility to get railings put up if required. Many municipalities will listen to constituents raising legitimate concerns about liability issues which can be easily remedied. Just because the bleachers have been this way forever doesn't mean the league and the city, school district or whatever entity owns the bleachers wouldn't be held liable in case of an injury.

Q: "I went on-line at your site to get a field survey, I couldn't find instructions or directions. If you could please e-mail me the instructions on how I can find the information on your web site I would appreciate it."

**Patty Ramirez
Atrisco Little League, Albuquerque, NM**

A: The information is available at:
<http://www.littleleague.org/manuals/asap/forms/survey.htm>

Q: "I have a question regarding the amended rule change on cleats for Junior and Senior Divisions. I know the rule stated this change for Junior and Senior Baseball, but is Junior and Senior Softball included in this as well? I have received a lot of questions on this along with many other questions on this amendment."

**Lee Joyce
Virginia State Safety Director**

A: Dan Kirby, risk management director of LLB, Inc., explained that baseball and softball, while similar, are different sports, and what is acceptable and good for one sport may not be appropriate for the other. So, no, the softball rules were not changed, just the baseball side to allow metal spikes in the Little League Baseball Junior and Senior Division.



Q: "We have a player who has a hard cast on his arm, up to his elbow. I believe I have read it in my safety information that no player can play with a cast. I am being asked if he can play in the outfield. Please let me know what Little League's rules are regarding casts."

**Sallie Wilhelmi, safety officer,
Cactus Foothills Little League**

A: Rule 1.11 (k) states: "Casts may not be worn during the game." There is no exception for a player's position, and LLB Risk Management Director Dan Kirby states players are not allowed to participate in either games or practices until the cast has been removed and a doctor has released the patient to play. A doctor's release prior to the cast's removal does not replace the rule above. This is not just for the player's safety, but for those around him/her. Playing outfield does not by-pass the rule, since the player still interacts with others both on field and at bat, and poses a risk both to him/herself in reinjuring it before it is healed and possibly injuring another with the cast. A soft foam pad around the cast does not change the rule, either.



'Can coaches catch pitchers?'



"I have a question regarding the rule for a coach catching (or not catching) a pitcher during practice. Is this a rule, or just something that is recommended? If it is a rule, please help me by locating it in the rule book."

Jim H.
by email



Coaches aren't supposed to act as players. According to Rule 3.09, "... Managers and coaches must not warm up a pitcher at home plate or in the bull pen or elsewhere at any time. They may, however, stand by to observe a pitcher during warm-up in the bull pen." This rule underscores the desire of Little League to let players play, and have coaches do the instructing, mentoring and coaching which is their role. One of the main reasons coaches give for doing it themselves is a lack of equipment or a lack of experienced players to catch. Safety is a real concern with having coaches catch pitchers; if they don't have equipment for the players to wear, they certainly don't have any for themselves. This doesn't remove the need for safety equipment. Each year coaches are injured while catching their pitchers. Remind coaches that developing other players in the catcher's position helps their team, and that full equipment is only necessary when a batter is ready to hit. A helmet and face guard will allow a player to warm up a pitcher while the actual catcher is getting on his/her equipment. While this rule specifically addresses game situations, coaches are likewise restricted from this in practices.

Reminder: Please use common sense in applying this rule. Should coaches warm up pitchers? No. Will it occasionally occur at practice? Yes. Should it be the

standard? No. Just make sure coaches understand the intent of allowing players to play, developing all players' abilities and their risk in catching without proper equipment.



"Why would tournament games require an enclosed field, ie: a fence, even if temporary, all the way around, and not regular games? Fencing, whether temporary or permanent, is expensive, and it seems to be rather ridiculous to have to have fencing down the entire length of the 1st and 3rd lines. I suppose there is a 'valid' reason for this, but I don't know what it is."

Ben Barkley, safety officer
Tempe, Ariz., Diamond Little League



Fencing is recommended in regular season but is only required for tournament play. This is for safety and quality of play. Since you have more people attending tourney games, and people go wherever they are not restricted, the safety issues are more critical. In quality of play, if you did not have fences, questions on ground rules (was the foul ball caught in the playing area or not, etc.) detract from the experience. During regular season games, fields are used which may also be used the same day for a soccer game using part of the outfield, or other sports using community fields. Requiring fencing on these fields could restrict leagues from being able to use fields which otherwise would be acceptable. But at tournament time fencing does become a requirement. Temporary fencing is available and utilized to maintain a safety division from playing areas and spectators, as well as to provide the best playing conditions possible.

Have a question or tip to share?
Call the ASAP Hotline:
800-811-7443,
or e-mail: asap@musco.com



Or write to us at:
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100 1st Ave. West
Oskaloosa, IA 52577



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FROM READERS

"One of our coaches, John Zaneski, places small cloth towels in a cooler with ice water. While players are on the bench during hot weather, they place a cool damp cloth on the back of their necks to stay cool."

Victor Frederick, safety officer/district safety officer
Pottstown, PA, Little League/Pennsylvania District 27

"At the beginning of the season I gave each manager a list of safety rules to be followed. I also posted the rules in each dugout for continued reinforcement. As the season progressed I would inform managers of any rule violations that I observed. I am happy to report that at this point in the season very few rule violations are being observed."

Bud White, safety officer
North Venice Little League, Los Angeles, CA

"I found this article through a discussion group and thought it interesting... perhaps you might also. It addresses youth training and physical development, etc."

<http://www.usatoday.com/life/health/child/lhchi213.htm>

Scott Rochelle, safety officer
Sparks, Nev., Little League

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800-811-7443

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