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ASAP news

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

Build Your League's Safety Plan Around "What If?"

"The smart man learns from his own mistakes; the wise man learns from the mistakes of others."

Building a safety program should be about following the path of the wise man: learn from the accidents of others. This off-season, look at your program and ask, "What would we do if _____ happened?"

Activities

What do your volunteers do in case of an accident? ***Require*** attendance at annual first aid and fundamentals trainings. Communicate key roles so people know them. Supply emergency contact numbers and instructions in case of accidents. Provide guidelines to volunteers, so they know what is expected, such as this Coach/Umpire Guidelines card (at right)

Equipment

Is your league looking at the equipment supplied to teams after the start of practice? Umpires should understand their role in supporting the safety of players by checking the equipment before games start.

A cracked aluminum bat or helmet can cause an avoidable injury, if not removed. "Dangling" throat guards should be on every catcher's mask.

Facilities

What do your teams do if a field has a hole in front of a base or home plate? Don't allow the game to go on.

Communicate what you want to have done, so it is clear to all volunteers.

Some problems can't be resolved right then, but empower your volunteers to fix those that can be, and recognize the difference.

Consider improving your safety plan by asking the big question: "What if?"

Coach/Umpire Guidelines

Before the Game — Meet at Home Plate

- Introduce plate and base umpires, managers and coaches
- Receive official lineup cards from each team
- Discuss any local playing rules (time limit, playing boundaries . . .)
- Discuss the strike zone
- Discuss unsportsmanlike conduct by the players
- Discuss the pitch count rule
- Get two balls from Home team
- Clarify calling the game due to weather or darkness
- Inspect playing field for unsafe conditions (holes, hazards)
- Discuss legal pitching motions or balks, if needed
- Discuss no head-first slides, no on-deck circle rules
- Be sure players are not wearing any jewelry
- Inspect equipment for damage and to meet regulations
- Ensure that games start promptly

During the Game — Umpires and Coaches

- Encourage coaches to speed play by having catchers and players on the bench prepared and ready to take the field with two outs
- Make sure catchers are wearing all proper safety equipment
- Continually monitor the field for safety and playability
- Pitchers warming up in foul territory must have a spotter and catcher with full equipment
- Keep game moving — one minute or eight pitches to warm up pitcher between innings or in case of mid-inning replacement
- Make calls loud and clear, signalling each properly
- Umpires should be in position to make the call
- No protesting of any judgment calls by the umpire
- Managers are responsible to keep their fans, players on best behavior
- Encourage everyone to think "Safety First!"

from North Issaquah, Washington, Little League

Copy and provide to umpires for reference.

Danger from the Sky!

Lightning Kills - Is Your League Prepared?

As the most intense months of the thunderstorm season approach, leagues need to be ready on and off the field. Although thunderstorms can be healthy for the earth and nature, they can also be deadly. With thunderstorms come high winds, heavy rain, hail, tornados, and one of the most deadly natural disasters, lightning. Everyone needs a plan of action for when a thunderstorm hits. Don't get caught in the storm.

At any given time, roughly 2,000 thunderstorms are occurring in the world, each producing its own devastating elements. Lightning is second only to flooding as the most deadly natural event. Around the globe, 100 flashes of lightning occur every second, with each bolt producing an average 1 billion volts.

On average, the chance of being struck by lightning in the U.S. is 1 in 600,000. Of course this varies with different factors such as geographical location and exposure to outdoor activities, such as baseball or softball. The more time spent outdoors, the greater the chance.

The eastern half of the U.S. is much more prone to lightning. Florida is by far the most dangerous state in terms of lightning deaths with 440 – more than twice the number of lightning-caused deaths of the second highest state, Texas (200) — during the period between 1959 to 2006.

Lightning Strikes Not Always Fatal

Although extremely dangerous, a lightning strike will not always kill its victim. Yes, some people do live after being hit by lightning, but the effects can also be very devastating. Long term neurological injuries include memory deficit, sleep disturbance, chronic pain, and dizziness. Lightning survivors sometimes have trouble processing information, are easily distracted, and have personality changes. Symptoms may not appear until months after the lightning strike.

Here are some quick facts to help you save someone's life if they are struck by lightning:

- The victim that was struck does NOT carry an electrical charge, so it is safe for you to touch the victim.
- Have someone in the area immediately contact 911.
- Check the victim's vital signs, see if they are breathing or have a pulse.
- Stay with the victim the entire time until medical help arrives.
- If needed, begin CPR.
- If it is possible, move the victim to a safer area. Some say lightning cannot strike the same place twice; this is false.
- Get people out of the area.

The 30-30 Rule

One way to help your and your Little League players' chances of not being struck by lightning is to observe the 30-30 Rule: If less than 30 seconds elapse between a lightning flash and thunder crash, seek shelter immediately. Then wait 30 minutes after the last lightning strike before resuming activities.

So, when a thunderstorm is approaching, watch for lightning. If lightning is seen, after the strike start counting to 30. If you hear thunder within the time it takes you to count to 30, that means that the lightning is too close and it's time to get everyone inside.

Find a Shelter

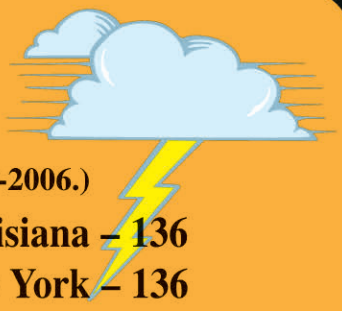
When picking a shelter, try to find one with electricity and/or indoor plumbing. If the building is hit, the lightning will travel through the wires or plumbing and disperse into the ground. DO NOT run the water, touch switches, or other electrical fixtures.

If a building is unavailable, proceed to a car with a metal cover. Contrary to most thinking, it is the metal cover that will protect you, not the rubber tires. Since lightning can travel in different directions, not just straight down, wait 30 minutes after the last lightning strike before returning outside. Half of all lightning deaths occur after the storm has passed.

Lightning is one of the most dangerous weather phenomenons in the world. Every Little League

needs a plan of attack. Whether it's implementing the 30-30 Rule, purchasing a lightning detector, or just halting the game at the first sight of danger, there is no such thing as being too cautious with the safety of the children.

Top 10 Deadliest States for Lightning



(In terms of lightning deaths, from 1959-2006.)

Florida – 440	**Louisiana – 136**
Texas – 200	**New York – 136**
North Carolina – 186	**Colorado – 132**
Ohio – 140	**Pennsylvania – 126**
Tennessee – 139	**Maryland – 123**

Statistics on lightning fatalities from the National Severe Storms Laboratory (http:www.nssl.noaa.gov)

Predictors, Detectors Eliminate Guess Work

Though it is impossible to get a pinpoint prediction on when and where lightning will strike, there are a few new devices that can greatly improve your chances of knowing when it is more likely for lighnting to strike.

SkyScan Lightning Detection

These portable lightning detector systems have an internal microprocessor that has the power to detect lighting up to 40 miles away. These systems come in two models, the EWS-Pro and the Model P5. Each time lightning strikes, the lightning detector will tell you how far it is away so you may judge how close is too close.

Model P5 has four different detection ranges. When lighting strikes in the 0-3, 3-8, 8-20, or 20-40 mile range, a light will indicate the range for 3 seconds, indicating how far away your storm is. This allows the user to determine if the storm is moving away, towards, or parallel to your position, the company explains. EWS-Pro includes the same range features as the Model P5 and also has an air horn in addition to the lighted range display to sound when a target range has been reached, as well as a rechargeable battery that can stay charged for seven or more days.

(SkyScan information provided by www.skyscanusa.com)

Thor Guard Lightning Prediction

A Florida-based company has been making a lightning prediction system since 1976. The company literature states: "Thor Guard uses a highly sophisticated sensor and computer to measure and analyze the electrostatic field in the atmosphere." This area is where the lightning is formed. Thor Guard is a lightning prediction system instead of the more common lightning detection system.

The difference is that a detection system needs lightning to strike before it can sound off or analyze data; the prediction system takes readings from the surroundings to determine when lightning is likely to occur in the area. The Thor Guard system emits a warning by air horn when lightning is predicted to strike.

Also with Thor Guard you may set your sensitivity levels depending on your needs. Your sensitivity levels can be set from 2 to 12 miles which should allow you somewhere from eight to 20 minutes to prepare for a storm's arrival and evacuate to a safe location.

(Thor Guard information provided by thorguard.com)

Information on lightning safety from National Weather Service (NWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

It's HOT Out;

With the hot days of summer come many outdoor Little League activities: practices, games, and team barbeques. Coaches, volunteers, parents, and guardians need to be prepared for heat illnesses that can occur during these activities.

Who's at Risk?

Anyone can be susceptible, although children and the elderly are at a greater risk.

- Children have a greater surface area-to-body mass ratio than adults, which causes a greater heat gain from the environment.
- Children produce more metabolic heat mass units (get hotter) than adults during physical activities that include walking or running.
- Sweating capacity is considerably lower in children than in adults, which reduces the ability of children to dissipate body heat by evaporation of sweat.

Usually the body can keep itself cool, however if the body does not cool properly or enough, the victim could suffer a heat related illness.

Stages of Heat Illness

1. Heat Cramps

In most cases heat illnesses come in stages. Heat cramps in muscles are a signal of the first stage. Cramps can be very painful and often occur first in the legs or stomach (feeling sick to their stomach). Young children may have difficulty understanding why their muscles hurt, so it is important adults recognize these signs.

An individual who has heat cramps should stop activity and rest. Drinking small amounts of cool water or sports drink could also be beneficial. Stretching and massaging the cramped muscle can also help. Once the cramp has subsided, if the victim has no other sign of heat illness, the person may resume activity.

2. Heat Exhaustion

The next, more serious, stage of heat illness is often referred to as *heat exhaustion*. Signals can include:

- Cool, moist, pale skin (the skin may be red right after physical activity).
- Headache.

Keep Kids Safer Longer with UV-Protection Sunblock

Another potential hazard of hot summer weather is sunburn. Sunburn can stop skin from radiating heat effectively. Sunburn is not only painful, but it can contribute to skin cancer. The majority of people receive 80 percent of their entire life's exposure to the sun by the time they turn 18. Sun over-exposure is mostly experienced as a child and young adult, the years when kids are involved in Little League.

Using UV-protection sunblock, with both UV-A and UV-B protection, helps prevent sunburn. Select a sunblock of at least SPF 15 (sun protection factor). Apply sunblock at least 30 minutes before going outside, even on cloudy days. Reapply sunblock every 2 hours, or after swimming or sweating.

Sunblock Myths and Facts

Myth: Wearing sunblock causes overheating during exercise.
Fact: Research says that it does not.

Myth: Cloudy days and water submersion eliminate the need for sunblock.
Fact: Up to 80% of ultraviolet radiation penetrates cloud cover, and up to 50% reaches swimmers under water.

Myth: Clothing or hats are as good as sunblocks.
Fact: Loosely woven fabrics transmit up to 30% of ultraviolet radiation. A white T-shirt has an SPF of 5 to 9. Forget baseball caps — hat brims need to be at least three inches wide all around to protect the entire head.

Myth: SPF values greater than 15 are overkill.
Fact: An SPF 30 sunblock is greatly superior to an SPF 15 sunblock. High SPF values compensate for sweating, loss in water and thin applications.

Myth: Sunscreens cause allergic reactions.
Fact: The 1 – 2% percent of people allergic to sunblocks react mostly to fragrances, preservatives and other substances, not the sun-blocking active ingredient.

Myth: Sunblocks should be discarded each year because they deteriorate.
Fact: Unless it smells foul, sunblock can be kept for several years. The active ingredients last forever. They may need shaking.

Safety First!

- Dizziness and weakness or exhaustion.
- Nausea.
- The skin may or may not feel hot.

3. Heat Stroke

The last stage of heat illness is often referred to as *heat stroke*. This stage of heat illness is life threatening. Call 9-1-1 or emergency services if someone exhibits the following signals:

- Vomiting.
- Decreased alertness level or complete loss of consciousness.
- High body temperature (sometimes as high as 105°F).
- Skin may still be moist or the victim may stop sweating and the skin may be red, hot and dry.
- Rapid, weak pulse.
- Rapid, shallow breathing.

Care for Heat Illness

Cool the body.
Give fluids.
Minimize shock.

1. – 2. Heat Cramps/Heat Exhaustion

Have the person rest in a cool place in a comfortable position. If the person is awake, provide a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not allow person to drink too quickly, and do not allow beverages with alcohol or caffeine which can make conditions worsen. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet towels or sheets. If the person refuses water, vomits or loses consciousness call 9-1-1 immediately.

3. Heat stroke

This is a life-threatening situation; call 9-1-1. Move the person to a cooler place and wrap wet towels or sheets around the player and fan them. Place ice packs, wrapped in cloth, around the person's ankles, wrists, armpits & neck can help cool the large blood vessels. Keep an eye out for signals of breathing problems. Keep the victim lying down.

Prevention - Player

Following a few simple steps during hot weather could prevent a heat illness, and prevent an exciting Little League activity from being spoiled. Steps for preventing a heat related illness can include:

- Dressing for the heat.
- Drink water.
- Eat small meals and eat more often.
- Avoid using salt tablets unless directed by a physician.
- Slow down!
- Stay indoors/out of the sun when possible.
- Use sunscreen with UVA and UVB-protection.
- Take frequent breaks.

Prevention - Facilities

Set up sun screens over the top of open dugouts, or on the back of dugouts that face the afternoon sun to help prevent over-exposure to the sun for your players. A simple mister in dugouts or hose with a spray attachment set to mist is another easy way to help cool players between innings without incurring a lot of cost. A water cooler or ice in the dugout encourages players to stay hydrated and cooled off by applying ice in towels.

According to the Texas Department of Health, 40 heat-related deaths were reported in Texas alone last year. The elderly, the very young and those who are sick or without access to air conditioning are most severely affected by heat.

Links

Go to the following link for a sport brochure on heat illnesses "*Parents' and Coaches' Guide to Dehydration and Other Heat Illness in Children*" – by the National Safe Kids Campaign and the National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA):
http://www.nata.org/consumer/docs/parentandcoachesguide.pdf
The National Athletic Trainers Association also offers an "Activity Health Tip: Heat Illnesses" page at:
http://www.nata.org/consumer/heatillnesses.htm

Follow this link to find more facts about heat injury from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons:
http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/fact/thr_report.cfm?Thread_ID=42

Relative Humidity (%)

Air Temperature

°F	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
110	136												
108	130	137											
106	124	130	137										
104	119	124	131	137									
102	114	119	124	130	137								
100	109	114	118	124	129	136							
98	105	109	113	117	123	128	134						
96	101	104	108	112	116	121	126	132					
94	97	100	102	106	110	114	119	124	129	136			
92	94	96	99	101	105	108	112	116	121	125	131		
90	91	93	95	97	100	103	106	109	113	117	122	127	132
88	88	89	91	93	95	98	100	103	106	110	113	117	121
86	85	87	88	89	91	93	95	97	100	102	105	108	112
84	83	84	85	86	88	89	90	92	94	96	98	100	103
82	81	82	83	84	84	85	86	88	89	90	91	93	95
80	80	80	81	81	82	82	83	84	84	85	86	86	87

Heat Index (Apparent Temperature)

With Prolonged Exposure and/or Physical Activity

- **Extreme Danger** – Heat Stroke or Sunstroke highly likely
- **Danger** – Sunstroke, muscle cramps, and/or heat exhaustion likely
- **Extreme Caution** – Sunstroke, muscle cramps, and/or heat exhaustion possible
- **Caution** – Fatigue Possible

Fall Into Safety: Are You Sh

Safety plans help drive leagues to improve as fall appr

Whether your league is shutting down for a well-deserved break or gearing up for a Training and Development session, now is a great time to look at several issues central to most leagues.

SHUTTING DOWN

Concession Stand

For many leagues, this is a real bread-winner. Concession stands help underwrite many costs related to the league. But they also can pose real risks, if precautions aren't taken. At the end of the season, have a qualified person inspect all your equipment to make sure it is still operating correctly. Discolored wires and frayed cords are a sure tip that equipment needs a closer check.

A Little League volunteer was badly burned by an eruption of hot grease from a deep-fryer that hadn't been inspected; another was scalded by hot water when a hot-water hose to the sink broke loose. Check now for signs of wear or simple loose connections.

Make sure your floors and stored materials will not cause trips, slips or other falls. Check that stairs and second floor walkways are safe for use; a volunteer was injured when the chair he was sitting on fell down the stairs because it was too close to a stairway opening with no railing.

Remove any perishable items, and thoroughly clean the stand to avoid drawing infestation of animals or insects. The off-season is a long time for any small opening to allow pests to make themselves at home, if they have something to attract them.

Facilities

Have all fences been checked for holes or other wear and either fixed or noted to take care of next spring? Make infields smooth and free of rocks and other debris like glass or metal that could cause injuries. Base-paths should be level and free of holes caused by sliding. Are new disengage-able bases on order for next year? These will be mandatory at the start of the 2008 season, and the demand is likely to be high.

Make "work days" safe. Supervise volunteers to ensure everyone follows safe practices. In one simple case, a volunteer was severely burned over one-third of his body after he poured gas on a brush pile and ignited it with a match, catching himself in the resulting blaze.

Equipment

Review the equipment now, so your league has time to order replacements. Are bats round and smooth, fitting through the Little League bat ring? Is the catchers equipment still in good shape, with pads and straps in all places required? Will your league need additional equipment due to increasing numbers in a particular division? Plan now, while the pressure is off.

GEARING UP

Review Spring Season

Look at any issues your league discovered in the first half to determine if you need enhancements prior to starting the second half. This is a great chance to enhance on the training you offered at the beginning of the season. Were coaches unaware of rules like not catching for pitchers? Did the pitch count regulation for baseball pitchers cause problems requiring more tracking, or new equipment to count pitches?

How about umpires? One league called the ASAP Hotline to say an umpire wouldn't allow a substitute runner for an injured player on base (who later required seven stitches to close a sliding-related gash). Could this happen in your league? Volunteer umpires need a lot of support, including help with procedural issues as well as rules. Look at updating training in the second season so that

utting Down or Gearing Up?

oaches: Time to look over league

everyone in your league is included, even umpires, and will know what should be done in case of an accident.

Were field conditions on a particular field causing more near-misses or injuries than on others? Or are training or equipment improvements needed in a particular division to reduce problems like sliding scraps and bumps that could develop into worse injuries?

Activities

Do any policies need improvement? What if a player is left at a field? Coaches must be instructed to wait until everyone is picked up before they leave. An upset mother called the ASAP Hotline to say her 8-year-old son had been left at their community's complex when the coach forgot he was asked to take the boy home that evening, since the parents were to be out of town until later. Eventually he got a ride home by an approved volunteer, but the board didn't seem overly concerned, since the boy got home safely. What could have happened makes this something every league should address.

Do you make players part of your safety plan? You can include them by giving a modified training similar to the safety discussion you give volunteers, but at their level. You could be surprised at the ideas they provide on ways to increase safety, especially if you hold a contest with prizes for them to win by looking for safety opportunities. How about parents; do you include them? Having more eyes watching for safety can only increase your league's awareness.

Volunteers

If you don't have all the same volunteers back, you will need to do at a minimum a check of all state sex offender registries to ensure they are eligible to participate. Coaches and managers are the backbone of any league, but you must ensure they are volunteering for the right reasons. Don't allow "practice" coaches to avoid this necessary step. Anyone on-field with the players must have been screened and approved by the board before being allowed to volunteer.

Rules

The rules don't change for a second season: The same equipment requirements for players (catchers, batters, etc.), and the same general rules for conducting play are in force.

Facilities

Do your policies guide how volunteers use the equipment at your facility? People using mowers or rotary edging devices should know to be cautious around others, to avoid hurting by-standers with thrown rocks or other projectiles caused by the equipment.

Are your spectators safe? Your fields may pose risks from balls on one field to the backs of spectators on another field. Walk-ways should be clear and level, free of tripping hazards and other dangers.

Equipment

Just like the start of the regular season, check and approve all equipment by a knowledgeable volunteer aware of the rules on each type. Bats must pass through the bat ring and be free of cracks, have grips if a non-wood type, and meet size requirements for the division of play. Review personal helmets for unapproved paint and decals that would prohibit the helmet from being used. Inform new players and parents of the rule on this, to avoid conflicts after a helmet has been altered.

Too many teams come to State and Regional All Stars tournaments with unapproved painted helmets, non-standard bats, and missing pieces of required equipment. In almost all cases, these teams state "no one enforced that rule before this." The safety of your teams' players rests on following the rules for proper equipment at all levels of play. Help strengthen that understanding in all your volunteers.

Don't allow practices or games to start without all the correct equipment having been issued and being in use. At the start of the regular season a player lacerated his knee on the metal peg at second base because the bases hadn't been set out from the equipment shed.

Do Your Fields Have Disengage-able Bases?

New rule will affect ALL leagues in 2008:

Rule 1.06: ". . . Beginning with the 2008 season, it will become mandatory that all leagues utilize bases that disengage their anchor. Leagues are encouraged to begin the process of implementing these types of base systems during the current season on all their fields so that the process is completed by the 2008 season."

These bases are expected to dramatically reduce the number of base-runner sliding injuries over traditional fixed bases. This is supported by research conducted by Dr. James Janda, where 637 games were played on the disengage-able-base field and 635 on the stationary-base field. By the end of the study, 45 players sustained injuries on the stationary-base field while only two were injured on the fields with disengage-able bases. Because of the potential for reducing injuries, all leagues MUST begin using disengage-able bases at the start of next season, even if you do not own the field(s) you use for play.

Most fields use a "Hollywood"-style base attached to a square metal post that allows the Rogers USA "break-away" base model to be affixed to it. This model also works for "professional" bases used by high schools and other higher level of play divisions with a square post.

A five-year study (2000-'04) showed 55 percent of injuries to runners occur while sliding into base, and 47 percent of all injuries to runners are fractures. The chart showing the results of the study as related to sliding injuries in baseball and softball can be found at: *http://www.littleleague.org/asap/tipdec05.asp.*

Installing disengage-able bases on your league's field is a great way to help make Little League Baseball and Softball safer for the children who participate.

For information on manufacturers of disengage-able bases, please visit *www.littleleague.org/common/equipment/view.asp?cid=5&id=25.*

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