

# ASAP news



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



## ASAP Numbers Up

*Areas of country improving, but nation overall only slightly up*

While the final tallies are not in, an early review of the ASAP participation numbers shows a slight improvement for 2008 over 2007. Participation looks to have edged over 77%, topping last year, with plans still trickling in.

This year, over 5% of all safety plans received to date have been from leagues that did not have a plan last year. So just getting all leagues that submitted a safety plan last year to submit a plan this year would push the total over 80% participation.

"If you have a safety plan in effect that you didn't send in, please do so," said Risk Management Director Dan Kirby. He reminded leagues that safety plans need to be implemented and submitted every year, with any updates made to them. Many leagues have the same safety initiatives operating every year but may not have sent in the required paperwork to re-qualify their league.

Safety plans and local leagues' commitment to safety awareness are the greatest contributors to the reduction in injuries and accidents in Little League. In the three-year span from 2004-2006, accidents were down to 1336 reported annually, or a drop of about 76% from pre-ASAP years' injury rates.

### Regions See Growth

#### Southwestern Region

The Southwestern Region has seen the greatest increase in safety participation this year, with an increase of about 8%. The biggest gain is Texas at 83%, with East Texas seeing a growth to about 90% participation, and West Texas growing to 75%. Several states' safety efforts have declined in the region, as leagues have not continued safety plans in place last year.

#### Southern Region

The next highest region in terms of growth was the Southern Region, with an overall increase of 6% over 2007. Leading this is West Virginia, again looking to come in at 100% as a state, followed by Virginia at 97%, and then Florida, looking to climb to 93% for 2008. Helping to increase their total participation, North and South Carolina both are posting strong double-digit gains, as is Tennessee.

#### Central Region

In the Central Region, the biggest gain comes from Illinois, where it looks to gain 10% over last year. Indiana also looks to improve, currently taking over the highest spot in the Central Region, as Wisconsin has currently dropped back to under 80%. Several other states in the Central also had dips in their participation, keeping the Central Region even at 69% participation for 2008.

#### Eastern Region

In the Eastern, Delaware returns and Rhode Island looks to become a first-time 100% ASAP state, increasing the region's safety participation by 2%. New Jersey posted strong gains, rising to the mid-80% area, followed by good increases in Pennsylvania. A few states had decreases, keeping the overall participation level at the modest gain.

#### Western Region

Although the West again leads the nation in ASAP participation and total safety plans submitted, the total has dropped a few percent from 2007. California, Arizona, and Alaska, all in the 80% range last year, have dropped some in 2008. Two bright spots in the region, Montana and Wyoming, are both on track to join those states at 100%, with every league implementing a safety program.

#### Still Time to Submit Plans

Leagues are encouraged to submit their safety plans now, especially if they had qualified plans in 2007, to help your state and region improve their safety standings. You can go online to check your plan's status at: <http://www.littleleague.org/programs/asap/plans.asp>

Is your league helping keep injuries down in Little League through safety planning? It's not too late to make a difference, to make it "safer for the kids" and everyone in your league.

# Weather: It's an Emergency!

*When storm clouds blow in, do your volunteers know what to do? A clear plan of action helps everyone do the right thing as quickly as needed, so no one is exposed to unnecessary risk through delay or second-guessing.*

**Remember:** Lightning is one of the most underrated killers, causing more fatalities annually than all other natural disasters except flooding. Florida is the top state for lightning strikes, but all states share the risk of lightning deaths and injuries.

Many people who are “only” injured from lightning strikes suffer long-term physical and neurological disabilities. If a storm approaches, evacuate the field, staying away from metal structures and objects.

**1. Watch for developing or approaching storms;** use all available technology to determine your fields' risk.

- Listen to weather radio alerts for severe thunderstorms with high winds — TAKE CARE: alerts are NOT issued “just” for thunderstorms with lightning
- Check websites with local radar tracking, especially those tracking lightning strikes
- Use dedicated lightning alerts — SkyScan™ and ThorGuard™ are two options

**2. Clear the field immediately** at the first sound of thunder. A thunderstorm can cast lightning up to 10 miles from the edge of the storm, or about as far as the sound thunder can carry.

## **WHAT TO DO:**

- Go to an enclosed building, if one is nearby
- Go to cars, with windows rolled up, if no enclosed building is available
- Complete a check of the facility for anyone still outdoors

## **WHAT NOT TO DO:**

- Don't allow players to remain in dugouts or spectators to stay in stands
- Don't carry metal items (like bats) or walk beside metal fences
- Don't go to an open-sided shelter; it is not adequate and should not be used

**3. Wait 30 minutes** after the last lightning strike/peal of thunder before returning to play

**4. Do not leave facility until directed;** wait at designated location(s) at field until the game is postponed or cancelled

- Make sure all players are accounted for and leaving with approved person(s)

For most leagues, 10 miles is the point when lightning is too close and fields

are evacuated. This gives everyone time to move to a safe place according to your plan, without risk or panic.

“The bottom line is that if you hear thunder, you need to get inside immediately,” said retired Air Force Brig. Gen. David L. Johnson, director of NOAA's National Weather Service. “Lightning can strike up to 10 miles from a thunderstorm, which is about the distance that the sound of thunder can travel and be heard. All thunderstorms produce lightning, and each lightning strike is a potential killer.”

## **Quick Links**

For more information on lightning safety, visit NOAA's website at: <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov>

To download the Coaches Guide from NOAA, go to: <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/overview.htm>

To download the Coaches Guide on Little League's website, to go: <http://www.littleleague.org/programs/asap/signs.asp>

## *Consider Electronic Solution to Ears and Eyes*

If a storm is approaching, many leagues will only know that their players and volunteers are in danger when someone hears thunder. Then, if it wasn't the umpire to hear, a discussion must take place as to whether it really was thunder that was heard, and what to do about it.

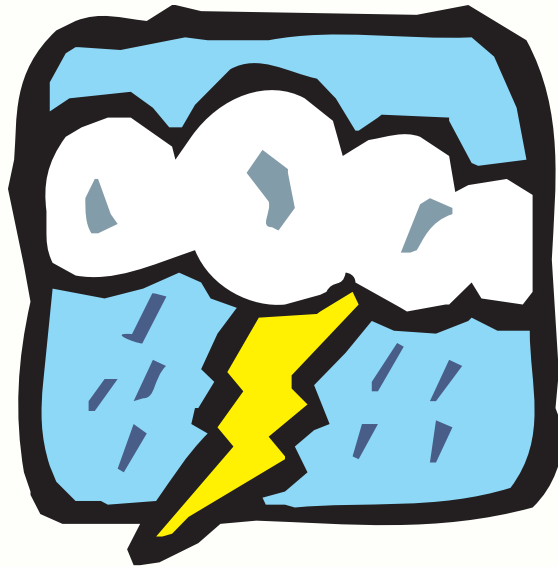
For a growing number of leagues, this approach wastes precious time that leaves everyone at risk while a decision is reached to clear the field. These leagues have chosen to use an electronic detector to alert league officials to the approach of storms before thunder can be heard.

SkyScan™ uses a lightning detector to track the electrical disruption caused by lightning and track the distance to your site. The device can be set to different levels of sensitivity, allowing you to see the distance lightning strikes are occurring and alert the umpires to halt play.

ThorGuard™ uses a different approach, determining a storm's electrical potential for unleashing lightning, before the first strike. This device also alerts users to the distance away from a site such potentials are. The manufacturers tout the ability of their device to determine the approaching risk without having to have a storm's first strike be at your facility.

# **If You See It, Flee It**

# **If You Hear It, Clear It**



## **REMEMBER:**

- **Track approaching storms the best way possible: Internet radar websites, dedicated storm warning system at field, or other storm warnings**
- **Evacuate fields when storms are about 10 miles away: Have players and spectators go to enclosed building or to cars with windows rolled up**
- **Clear fields immediately after thunder has been heard or lighting seen!**

## **PLEASE WAIT!**

- **Wait 30 minutes before returning to play after last sign of lightning activity in your area**
- **Cars shouldn't leave until the game is called, so all players can be accounted for**

*Guidelines from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service*

# Keep Players Safe Even Off the Field



*Are you doing everything you can to protect the people coming and going at your facility?*

Pedestrians are the second highest group of motor-vehicle deaths in the United States, higher even than motorcyclist deaths. In 2006, 4,892 people were killed by motor vehicles while on foot while another 773 were killed while riding their bicycles. This represents 13% of all motor-vehicle-related deaths in 2006, the latest data.

News articles abound with vehicles that crash into groups of people, either from a malfunction of the vehicle or an impaired driver. The larger the crowd, the greater the chance is of a vehicle coming in contact with pedestrians. Little League games are no different, and you should take steps to protect your spectators and players.

## **Sidewalks, Walkways and Crosswalks**

As part of your annual facility assessment, look at the flow of traffic to and around your fields. Do you have marked pedestrian crosswalks with sidewalks or paths away from roadways? Separating walkers from drivers is the best way to avoid tragedies.

If your field doesn't have paths or sidewalks, begin discussions on how that can be accomplished. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA),

several keys will reduce the risks to your pedestrians:

- Reduce the speed of traffic around/within the facility
- Reduce pedestrian risks at street crossings
- Provide sidewalks and crosswalks separate from motor vehicles
- Improve awareness of and visibility between cars and pedestrians
- Improve pedestrian and motorist behaviors

When games are in progress, every child wants to chase foul balls. Make it an adult's responsibility, not a running child's, to cross streets or other traffic areas to retrieve them. Help empower adults through clear and posted policies to steer children to safe crosswalks and designated crossings, rather than allowing them to run into streets from between parked cars.

Create crosswalks that are clearly marked for all foot traffic, and work with the local government to get permission for stop signs or temporary barriers where required. Create awareness through signs and reminders of the possibility of players in and around cars in the parking lot, to avoid accidents there.



## **Checklist:**

- Create barriers
  - temp or permanent
  - to separate parking areas from spectator areas
- Create designated crosswalks for pedestrian traffic
- Create adequate buffers between sidewalks and roadway
- Create safe procedures for retrieving foul balls — DON'T have players/children cross streets chasing balls
- Get permission for stop signs — temporary or permanent — wherever needed

## **Bike Safety Matters**

Provide bicycle safety education in the pre-season and reminders throughout the season, especially on the importance of wearing a bike helmet.

No player would step into the batter's box without his or her helmet. Help educate players who ride bikes, they need to wear their bicycle helmets.

Please remind players to only wear their helmets while riding their bikes. The Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) urges children not to wear bike helmets while on the playground, due to reported strangulations caused by the larger helmet getting caught in jungle gyms and overhead bars where the helmet catches but a child's head would have passed easily.

## **Online Resources**

**US DOT's FHWA Pedestrian Forum – Spring 2008:**

[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/PED\\_BIKE/ped/pedforum/pedforum\\_spring08.htm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/PED_BIKE/ped/pedforum/pedforum_spring08.htm)

**Use the ASAP Ballplayer Crossing poster to mark crosswalks:**

<http://www.littleleague.org/programs/asap/signs.asp>

**Resident's Guide for Creating Safe and Walkable Communities:**

[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/ped/ped\\_walkguide/ch1\\_types.htm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped/ped_walkguide/ch1_types.htm)

**Develop a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan:**

<http://www.walkinginfo.org/training/pdps/>

# Heat Isn't Child's Play for Kids

*This summer, take steps to protect your league's members from heat illness*

Heat stroke, heat exhaustion, and heat cramps are all highly possible outcomes for your players and volunteers if they are not protected from the sun's power. When games are played in high heat or heat and high humidity, precautions are needed.

According to the American Association of Pediatrics, children's bodies can't tolerate heat as well as adults, so don't expect them to perform in the same conditions you can. Watch for heat illness signs: weakness, dizziness, slow pulse, and clammy skin. If sweating can't cool the body, especially because the player is dehydrated, heat stroke could develop. Signs of this are confusion, collapse, rapid pulse, and dry skin (no longer sweating).

The AAP notes heat stroke may cause convulsions or even unconsciousness. This is a medical emergency and professional help should be sought immediately. In some cases, heat stroke can kill but it can also cause permanent brain damage in victims who survive.

## **Drink Early, Drink Often**

Remember, the best protection for heat illness is water and rest. The maxim is: Drink early, drink often, even when players aren't thirsty. Players should arrive for games/practices adequately hydrated and drink at least 5 ounces of water every 15-20 minutes while they are active in the heat.

Ask players to bring water or a sports drink with modest amounts of electrolytes, but nothing with caffeine that acts as a diuretic and drains water from the body. Try to provide water for players wherever possible at your facility.

## **Online Resources:**

Use the ASAP poster to help encourage proper hydration throughout the game:

<http://www.littleleague.org/programs/asap/signs.asp>

Check out this heat index guide to heat and humidity in the June, 2005, ASAP News:

[http://www.littleleague.org/newsletters/asap/index\\_asap.asp](http://www.littleleague.org/newsletters/asap/index_asap.asp)

Red Cross heat injuries resource page:

<http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/tips/heat.html>



Evidence shows that sunscreen of at least SPF 15 should be applied to exposed skin every time children will be in the sun for extended periods, to help keep the player cool and to protect against future skin cancer risk.

## **Take first steps:**

- Provide sunshades for all dugouts and spectator areas as possible
- Provide cool water and wet towels (with or without ice) for players and umpires to apply to necks
- Provide topical sunscreen for players and encourage its use on all exposed skin
- Take breaks in the shade between innings, or every 20 minutes
- Set up a sprinkler in a grassy or paved area where players can cool off

## **Take it to the next level:**

- Install a water mister near or in dugouts to boost cooling
- Provide umpires with a Camelback-style water container for hydrating during innings
- Develop a "cool room" in your concession stand, or just a tent with walls, with fans or air-conditioning for those overcome by heat

Anyone who begins to develop cramps, dizziness, or other signs of heat stress should be removed from the game, given cool water and placed in as cool a place as possible: in a car with air-conditioning, or in a cool, shaded area. But make sure volunteers know to call 9-1-1 if the player becomes disoriented or confused, as this is a sign of the more serious heat stroke.

Make this the summer your league stops heat illnesses cold.

# Upgrade Concession Safety with Food Tips



Go online for posters and guidelines to guide your volunteers while in the snack stand

Clean. Separate. Cook. Chill. Simple, but effective.

These are the four steps that the Partnership for Food Safety Education's Fight Bac! project wants everyone who prepares and serves food to understand and follow.

This program is a joint partnership between food industry associations, professional societies in food science, nutrition and health consumer groups, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). So when you consider improving the ways your concession stand handles food, take a tip from the people who know!

## Did you know?

- This year, about 5,000 people will die from food-borne illness
- Approximately 13 men, women, and children die every day from food-borne illness in the U.S.
- More than 325,000 people are hospitalized each year for food-borne illness nationally
- Approximately 76 million cases of food-borne illness occur annually across the United States

## Proper Food Handling

The Partnership for Food Safety Education stresses four steps in proper food handling:

- Clean:** Wash hands and surfaces often
- Separate:** Don't cross-contaminate
- Cook:** Cook to proper temperature
- Chill:** Refrigerate promptly

## Clean It Up!

Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Wash cutting boards and utensils in hot soapy water after each use. Wash countertops with hot, soapy water after preparing food.

If you prepare cooked food in your concession stand, separate the duties for money handling and food preparation. No one should move directly from handing out change to fixing the next hot dog.

## Cook to Right Temp

Use a food thermometer for all cooked meats, and don't stop cooking until the internal temperature has reached the proper temp for the meat. Check the online resources section for links to websites with proper temperature listings. Print these out for your volunteers' future reference.

For stove top- or microwave-prepared foods, make sure to stir or rotate the food so the entire dish/food is thoroughly heated. For sauces, soups, and gravies, bring to a rolling boil when reheating.

## And Chill It

The final step is to cool all foods to 40 degrees or below, and to use an appliance thermometer to check the temp. Chill leftovers or other cooked foods within two hours of removing from heat. Divide food into shallow trays or containers for rapid cooling. Do not overload the fridge.

Remember to thaw meat, poultry, and seafood in the refrigerator, not on the counter.

The USDA's Be Food Safe campaign reminds: "Bacteria spreads fastest at temperatures between 40 degrees and 140 degrees F, so chilling food properly is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of food-borne illness. The four easy lessons of Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill can help prevent harmful bacteria from making your family sick."

## Online Resources:

USDA's *Be Food Safe* campaign: [www.befoodsafe.gov](http://www.befoodsafe.gov)

Partnership for Food Safety Education's Fight Bac!: [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)



## Separate Meats from Veggies and Fruits

Keep fresh vegetables and fruits away from raw meats, poultry, and fish in both the refrigerator and the countertop prep surfaces. Use a different cutting board for each type food, or wash between uses with hot, soapy water to keep clean.

# Safety News of Note

## Check Backgrounds for Kids' Sakes

A school in Florida this spring learned the hard way that background checks aren't just for show. A properly-conducted check would have discovered that a volunteer coach who had served for two years in their baseball program shouldn't have been allowed near the high school youth he coached.

The man was arrested in April for holding an open party at his home, where teens — some from the school where he volunteered — were caught drinking alcohol. After his arrest, it was discovered the man had a criminal record.

Titusville, Fla., High School is now trying to explain why it hadn't discovered that the man had not undergone a background check the first year, as required by their internal policies, and had been allowed to coach while the check was being conducted this year.

After his arrest, it was discovered the man had falsified information on his background form to hide criminal charges that would have kept him from being approved as a volunteer. Administrators could not explain why he was not checked last year, and said they are taking steps to address why the man was allowed to volunteer while his application, which included the background check, was being processed this year.

Has your league checked all the backgrounds on the volunteers working with the youth on your teams? A government-issued ID must be checked as part of the volunteer application process, so your board knows the name you're checking is the person who is volunteering.

Little League has again this year provided every league and district with 80 free checks through ChoicePoint. Have you used yours?

## Inspect Your Bleachers for Wear and Tear

The Associated Press reported seven people were injured when the back railing apparently broke on the bleachers they were sitting in at an 11- and 12-year-old baseball tournament in Racine, Wis., in May.

The bleachers were reportedly five seats high, and the seven injured were all sitting on the top row when the back gave way.

## Base Coach Safety Issue Raised by Injuries

When Minor League Baseball coach Mike Coolbaugh was killed while coaching bases last year, Major League Baseball decided the issue should not be ignored. This winter, MLB owners voted to require helmets, either the ear-flap models batters wear or just the baseball cap style, on all base coaches in the 2008 season.

With the increased attention of the risks posed for base coaches, news media have reported several instances of coach injuries in both college and high school games.

In New York state, Oswego State University baseball coach Frank Paino was hit in the head during a college playoff game with St. John Fisher College. Paino was not able to complete the game, and the hosting St. John's team conceded the game out of concern for what had happened to Paino. Oswego's coach was able to return to the team for the rest of their run, culminating in the ECAC Upstate New York Championship.

In a more serious incident, St. Albans High School (Washington DC) junior varsity baseball coach Stephen Wheeler underwent emergency surgery to treat a fractured skull and swelling, caused by a thrown ball. Wheeler was coaching third base when a defensive player chased an overthrown ball, turning and throwing without seeing that Wheeler was in his line-of-fire. The coach was reported in fair condition following the surgery.

In high school and Little League, players coaching first or third base must wear a batting helmet. Should you recommend helmets to your coaches for their safety?

**Rule book reminder:** Helmets for base coaches have always been an option for adults, and must be worn by players serving as base coaches.

Witnesses reported hearing a loud noise just prior to the accident. The seven people all fell backwards to the ground.

Have you inspected your bleachers for wear or stress? Don't assume that equipment is still sound if you haven't checked it. Now is a good time, just before tournament time and larger crowds attend games, to inspect your facilities and avoid potential problems.

# Common Sense Ideas from 2008 Safety Plans

“The inter-league rules committee has adopted a rule for the minor leagues that prohibits the batter from “fake bunting” to draw the infielder in and then swing away. This is an attempt to prevent lesser developed and lesser skilled kids from getting injured from a batted ball.”

*Washington Township Baseball Association Little League  
Apollo, PA*

“For the safety of all players, no team in any league will play more than three games in a week. ... In concession stands, all floors are covered with mats and no-slip grids.”

*Audubon Little League  
Audubon, NJ*

“No digging is allowed in the outfield or infield grass.”

*East Hampton Little League  
East Hampton, MA*

“All soft pitch or other drills using a tee will be done in an open area or into an approved batter’s screen. No drills will be allowed hitting into any fence. Helmets will be worn during these drills.”

*Haddon Township Little League  
Haddonfield, NJ*

“Children should not be encouraged to play through pain. Pain is a warning sign of injury. Ignoring it can lead to greater injury.”

*Hopatcong Little League  
Hopatcong, NJ*

“Safety Contest — Players who make suggestions can earn credit for free items at the concession stand. Suggestions can either be made through the suggestion box at the field or by email to the safety coordinator.”

*West Windsor Little League  
West Windsor, NJ*

“Foul balls batted out of the playing area will be returned to the snack shed for a free soda and not thrown over the fence during a game.”

*Thomaston Little League  
Thomaston, CT*

“Teach your players never to throw the ball until they see the glove — meaning the receiving player’s glove is up and in the ready-to-catch position.”

*Nanticoke Little League  
Seaford, DE*

“The concession stand is opened before the season, thoroughly cleaned and the equipment (microwave, oven, and coffee maker) is inspected by a volunteer fireman.”

*Town of Pawling Little League  
Pawling, NY*

without prior permission.  
chartered Little Leagues  
News may be reprinted by  
All materials in the ASAP  
E-mail: asap@musco.com  
Fax: 641/672-1996

**24 Hour Hotline:  
800/811-7443**

© May 2008  
Little League®  
and Musco Lighting  
Musco Lighting  
facilitated and published by  
and Softball  
Little League Baseball®  
ASAP News is a service of  
ASAP News

539 US Route 15 Hwy  
PO Box 3485  
Williamsport, PA 17701-0485



PRESORTED  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
DES MOINES, IA  
PERMIT NO. 4053