4.4.17 Safe Conduct of Sport Activity in Schools

Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools

Athletics

Introduction
Where considered appropriate, for example inclusion in a school sport program, parents or caregivers must be informed of full details of the location, supervision to be provided and activities to be undertaken when seeking their written permission. Students are to be instructed to use adequate sun protection, eg. a SPF30+, broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen reapplied regularly and a hat when appropriate.

Teacher/Instructor Qualifications and Experience
The teacher/instructor must have appropriate expertise and or training in the teaching/coaching in Athletics. A teacher must be present who has recognised current training in emergency care.

Supervision
Supervision will need to be provided considering:
- age, experience and capability of the students
- the combined experience or expertise of the staff
- the activities or events to be conducted. If an adult other than a teacher is engaged for instruction or coaching, a teacher must be present to take overall responsibility. Equipment awaiting use must be supervised. Equipment not in use must be stored to prevent unauthorised use.

Equipment
All equipment must be regularly checked for safety and regularly maintained. Equipment must be stored so that unauthorised use is prevented. For the use of starting pistols and caps, refer to the Student Protection section of this document. Equipment must be appropriately sized, modified or weighted to match the ability and strength levels of the students.

Clothing should not restrict movement or hamper students in any way.

Venues
Running surfaces must be level and firm so as to avoid foot and ankle injuries. Avoid running on hard surfaces such as bitumen or concrete.

Sand pits must be raked and and checked for foreign materials prior to the commencement of the activity – with spade. The outer edges of the pit should be level with the ground.

Safety

General
Students are to be instructed to wear sports shoes, or as appropriate, running, throwing or jumping spikes.

Warm-up and stretching are essential prior to all training and competition.
Stretching and warming up are vital elements in preventing injury and the following points should be followed when stretching to ensure maximum safety:

- warm-up prior to stretching
- stretch prior to and after work-outs
- stretch alternate muscle groups
- stretch gently and slowly
- never bounce or stretch rapidly
- stretch to the point of tension or discomfort but never pain
- do not hold the breath when stretching, breathe slowly and easily while stretching.

Any complaint of pain, tenderness, limitation of movement or disability should be promptly referred to a qualified sports medicine professional for management. Particular note should be taken of the areas of adolescent growth which are vulnerable in training and include the spine, knees and wrists.

Students are to be instructed that equipment must not be used without supervision.

The use of spikes will be limited to structured training sessions and certain competition events (zone sport associations will have restrictions on the use of spikes). Spikes must only be worn at and during the specified competition event. They are not to be worn to and from an event or between events.

Where the use of spiked shoes is permitted, students should be instructed to take extreme care to avoid spiking injuries, especially in track events. For those events not run entirely in lanes, particular care should be taken at the start. In the 800 metre event, the lane start is recommended. For 1500, 3000 and 5000 metre events, steeplechase and walks, the echelon start should be used to minimise crowding at the start.

A well-equipped medical kit must be readily available.

Where possible, ice should be available for the treatment of injuries.

Prevention of dehydration is essential during training and competition. Students are to be instructed to consume water prior to and during sessions.

**Jumping Events**

Landing and take-off areas must be maintained to avoid risk of injury to students. Equipment awaiting use must be supervised.

Equipment not in use must be properly stored to prevent unauthorised use.

Jumping events are not to be undertaken by students with a history of ankle or knee injuries.

**High jump**

For high jump activities the following safety strategies must be employed:

- ensure that where the landing area consists of several mats, they are held firmly together with straps or ties and the whole area is covered with a one piece overlay
- ensure mats are carried by handles at the side and not carried aloft on backs, shoulders or head
- ensure run-up and take-off areas are level, dry and free from slippery material
- specific take-off points should be identified and insisted upon to avoid landing off the mats
• triangular bars must not be used at all. Circular fibreglass bars are recommended for competition
• to ensure high jump bars do not carry onto the landing mats, it is recommended that looped straps are used
• the high jump bar must be removed from the competition area when not in actual use for supervised pre-competition warm-ups and actual competition
• the high jump uprights must be sufficiently stable to avoid falling on to the mats during the course of a jump.

High jump landing mats should:
• cover an area of approximately 3600mm x 2400mm with height from floor of 600mm
• be linked together to avoid separation
• have linking tabs spaced at the distance of one every 900mm
• have a breathing fabric on the top (landing) surface which is spike resistant
• be filled with a foam rubber or synthetic foam block with a minimum density of 18 kg/m³.

Fosbury Flop high jump technique:
Where appropriate, specially selected students who display promise in lead-up activities should be chosen for development in small specialised groups conducted by teachers or coaches with specific expertise in the event.

All students engaged in the Fosbury Flop technique must be given adequate lead-up activities before advancing to the actual technique.

Gymnastic mats are unsuitable for use as materials directly landed upon by the competitor, but may be used, at a depth of 15cm, around the end/back periphery of suitable high jump bags.

Long/triple jump
For long/triple jump activities the following safety strategies must be employed:
• rake landing pits before any jumping takes place. Any solid or sharp objects must be removed
• ensure the take-off board is clearly visible (and preferably painted white), flat and level with the ground surface
• steel or wooden markers are not to be used to note distances either adjacent to or in the landing pit. Coloured strips of a flat flexible material are suggested to indicate distances achieved by participants
• ensure the approach area is clearly defined and kept free from any obstructions
• ensure jumping takes place from one direction only
• rake pit after each jump to ensure a level landing surface
• ensure rakes, forks and shovels are not left unattended in, or beside, the jumping area
• ensure the depth of sand is appropriate for competition in all age groups and that the depth of the sand is consistent in all areas of the pit
• the triple jump is not recommended for students with a history of ankle or knee injuries.

Throwing Events
Throwing events require the development and refinement of coordination, skills and techniques in order to improve performances. In addition, strength is important in these events.
Training is of a repetitive nature and thus young athletes are at risk from overuse injury to immature tissues especially in the vicinity of upper limb joints, with the lower back and knees also being areas of concern. These injuries can be avoided if young students limit or restrict their volume of throwing in each session. Most throwing should also be sub-maximal in training situations.

Due to the nature of throwing events, special attention needs to be given to supervision at training activities or competition events. To ensure maximum safety, the following strategies must be employed:

- activities must be sited away from buildings, pedestrians and other activities
- the site must enable adequate supervision of students
- the throwing area must be of adequate width for group instruction, or alternatively, the number of throwers is reduced on each occasion so that:
  - all throwing takes place in one direction
  - the safety of individuals in adjoining areas is assured
- considering the ability level of the group, the throwing area must be of adequate length to contain the implements thrown
- the throwing sector area, approach and launch areas must be marked with highly visible markers to prevent access by non-participants
- the approach and launch area must be dry and free of any loose materials
- students should walk to retrieve implements only after the all clear is given. The implement should be returned by carrying, not throwing or rolling
- students must be given instructions as to their movements following the throw and awaiting retrieval.

**Shot Put**

For shot put activities, the following safety strategies must be employed:

- transport shots in sturdy containers and give due consideration to limiting the total mass
- ensure students are in line, adequately spaced, and all throwing occurs in the one direction when instructing groups in the standing throw and linear glide techniques
- The rotational throwing technique should only be carried out by a qualified athletics instructor. For group instruction in the rotational throwing technique:
  - ensure the turn is practised with modified equipment or without a shot
  - where the shot is to be thrown using the turn, ensure only one individual throws at a time
  - where throwing takes place, ensure that other students are behind protective cages or barriers and well clear of the wire
  - where a protective cage or barrier is unavailable, ensure other students are at least 10 metres behind and to the non-throwing side.

It is recommended that a specific throwing area be set aside for shot put. This will assist when repairing indentations (using sand/soil) following the period of use. This measure will reduce the risk of ankle injuries.

Protective cages or improvised barriers are recommended when using the turn (eg. fence, hockey nets).

**Discus**

For discus activities the following safety strategies must be employed:

- check discuses, and withdraw from use those with cracked rims or loose centre screws
- for group instruction in the standing throw ensure:
o throwers are at least 5 metres apart
o left-handed throwers are placed on the left side of the group
o for group instruction in the turning throw:
  o ensure the turn is practised with modified equipment or without a discus
  o where a discus is to be thrown using the turn, ensure that only one individual throws at a time
  o where throwing takes place, ensure other students are behind protective cages or barriers and well clear of the protective wire
  o where a protective cage or barrier is unavailable, ensure that other students are at least 20 metres behind and to the non-throwing side
  o ensure discusses being returned to the throwing area are carried not rolled.

Protective cages or improvised barriers are recommended when using the turn (eg. fence, hockey nets).

Javelin (N/A for Primary Schools)

For javelin activities, the following safety strategies must be employed:

- ensure javelins are carried by the grip and in a vertical position with the tail up, except when the thrower has entered the specific approach area and is preparing to throw
- forbid running with the javelin except when preparing to throw
- forbid running to retrieve a javelin to prevent running into the tail end of a javelin
- instruct students to place one hand over the tail end of the javelin before attempting to twist it from the ground
- instruct students to place one hand over the tip of the tail end when picking up a javelin lying flat on the ground. This hand should be kept in place until the tail end is raised above head height as the javelin is lifted into the vertical position
- ensure javelins are not thrown under or near power lines.

Hammer (N/A for Primary Schools)

Introductory activities may be taught in class groups. Swings and turns may be taught and practised with a variety of improvised equipment such as a basketball in a sack.

Selected students, in small groups instructed by teachers or coaches with specific expertise in the event, should then be chosen.

For hammer activities, the following safety strategies must be employed:

- because of the high release velocities and relative unpredictability of the hammer flight path, ensure that the teaching or coaching with actual hammers is undertaken only where a proper hammer cage is available. A protective cage should also be used when teaching with improvised equipment
- a glove must be worn when throwing
- ensure non-participants remain outside and behind the cage, well clear of the wire
- ensure hammers being returned to the throwing area are dragged not carried
• change wire regularly to avoid metal fatigue
• make regular wire checks to ensure that the wire is secure at the handle and swivel end of the hammer head.

Track Events
The track must be checked to ensure it is free from obstacles and loose objects.
Starting blocks, pegs and hammers must be removed from the track and stored in a safe place when not in use.

Refer to Student Protection section for the use of starting pistols and caps.

Sprints
Finishing tapes must not be used in sprint activities.
Students should run in lanes wherever possible.
Ensure students are aware of potential dangers regarding the use of spikes.

Relays
For relay activities the following strategies must be employed:

• for 4x100m events, instruct students to stay in their lanes during baton changes and for a safe period afterwards. For 4x400m relays, this applies to the first change only
• ensure relay changeover areas are supervised at all times during competition
• ensure all batons are made of lightweight material such as aluminium and are regulation size.

Spikes must not be worn by students when learning baton changing.

Hurdles (N/A for Primary Events)
For hurdle activities the following safety strategies must be employed:

• ensure hurdle weights are not placed too far from the base of the upright for the height of the hurdle
• instruct students that hurdling must take place only in the direction for which the hurdles are designed to fall
• ensure hurdles used for training beginners and primary school students are of light-weight construction
• ensure hurdle heights and spacings are set to facilitate learning of the correct technique.