5.6 Use of Cap Starting Pistols

Diocese of Lismore
Primary Sports Council

Handbook of Sport Vol11/98
Health and Safety Procedures
“Use of Cap Starting Pistols”
Interim Policy

Background – Limits on Noise Exposure

In NSW the regulation governing noise in the workplace is the Occupational Health and Safety (Noise) Regulation 1996 which is part of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1983, No 20.-
This states:
“……a place of work is unsafe and a risk to health if any person is exposed there to noise levels:
that exceeds an eight-hour noise level equivalent of 85Db(A) or that peak at more than 140 Db(lin).”

This means that the unprotected ear should not be exposed to an impulsive level at, or greater than, 140Db(lin) at any time.

On August 22, 1997, Mr Gordon Jarvis of the National Acoustic Laboratories, Chatswood, recommended after a series of tests on cap starting guns that the starter, while wearing protective muffs themselves, should stand no closer than five (5) metres from a competitor when using a cap starting gun to ensure the safety of the competitor.

Diocesan Policy (Interim)

Teachers Must:

- Ensure that starting caps are always kept under adult supervision in a rigid plastic or wooden box until ready for immediate use.
- Ensure that starting gun caps are never carried in pockets where friction or static electricity may cause ignition.
- Never allow students to handle cap starting guns or caps.
- Store cap starting guns and caps in secure locations (preferably separate) preventing access by unauthorised persons.
Before storing cap starting guns and caps in a secure location, particularly at the conclusion of a carnival, ensure that the starting gun is unloaded and not in the primed position and that all unused caps have been returned to the rigid storage area.

This action should be the responsibility of the person last using the gun prior to a break in the program (the starter). The process should be repeated at each break in the carnival, and the guns and caps stored in the appropriate area under supervision.

Maintenance of the Cap Starting Gun
The cap starting gun must be:

- Constantly checked and always maintained in a safe condition.
- Working parts that indicate stress, metal fatigue or such mechanisms that causes “hair trigger” are reasons to replace the cap starting pistol.
- Any reports from the starter during or at the conclusion of sporting events regarding such matters should be acted upon immediately.

Ref:  
* Dave Power NSW Sports Unit 6/6/97  
* Gordon Jarvis National Acoustics Laboratories 22/8/97
  Lismore Diocese Primary Sports Council March, 1998

**Additional Safety Procedures**

- Wherever possible starters should be accredited starting officials through statute bodies such as Athletics Australia or NSW Swimming Association.
- Ear muffs with a SLC 80 rating of not less than 20 must be used by the starter.
- Any person adjacent to the starter should also wear ear muffs.
- The required safety margin for unprotected ears must be no less than five metres (5m).
- Schools are encouraged to pursue alternative starting methods such as electronic flash starters as the technology develops.