

# Soccer Safety



## **Goal Safety - Movable soccer goals can fall over and kill children who climb on them or hang from the crossbar.**



Movable soccer goals can fall over and kill children who climb on them or hang from the crossbar. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has reports of at least 24 deaths since 1979 resulting from soccer goals falling over. In addition, an estimated 120 injuries involving falling goals are treated each year in U.S. hospital emergency rooms.

Almost all of the goals involved in these tip overs appeared to be "homemade" by high school shop classes, custodial members, or local welders, not professionally manufactured. These "homemade" goals are often very heavy and unstable.

Since 1990, the CPSC has worked with the Coalition to Promote Soccer Goal Safety to address risks presented by these soccer goals and to make movable soccer goals more stable. The Commission and the Coalition strongly recommend that soccer coaches, school officials, and soccer field maintenance personnel prevent goals falling over by anchoring goals to the ground. They should chain goals to a fence or permanent structure when not in use and warn students not to climb on goals.

### **Follow These Safety Suggestions/Guidelines:**

- Securely anchor or counter-weight movable goals at all times (SEE ILLUSTRATION BELOW).
- Never climb on the net or goal framework.
- Remove nets when goals are not in use.
- Anchor or chain goals to nearby fence posts, dugouts, or any other similar sturdy fixture when not in use.
- Check all connecting hardware before every use. Replace damaged or missing fasteners immediately.
- Ensure safety labels are clearly visible.
- Fully disassemble goals for seasonal storage.
- Always use extreme caution when moving goals.
- Always instruct players on the safe handling of and potential dangers associated with movable soccer goals.
- Use movable soccer goals only on level (flat) fields.



To get more information on soccer goal anchors or to get free soccer goal warning labels, contact the Coalition to Promote Soccer Goal Safety at the Soccer Industry Council of America, 200 Castlewood Dr., North Palm Beach, FL 33408

## **Parking Lot Safety - All clubs should establish an efficient and safe parking lot drop-off and pick-up system.**

All clubs should establish an efficient and safe parking lot drop-off and pick-up system that is equipped to handle large numbers of people. Below are some of the critical areas that you will want to consider as well as share with everyone in your organization to keep everyone - *and especially the kids!* - safe.



### **HASTE IS YOUR WORST ENEMY**

Nowadays, it's normal to see a hurried parent or guardian rushing to drop their children at the local soccer field for practice and games. While punctuality is a virtue, rushing - *and subsequent carelessness* - certainly is not. Adults aren't the only people who fall victim to haste. Kids love to run through parking lots and in between cars in their haste to start playing, forgetting to **look both ways**. That's why it's important to take a strong safety in the streets stance to prevent parking lot accidents.

### **PLAYER LOADING ZONE**

Do not leave this to chance! Designate a place for parents to load and unload passengers. If there is no convenient curbside to do this, **create a loading zone** by placing a temporary sign during practices and games to indicate where cars should stop. Loading zones will help eliminate confusion for drivers and passengers. *To help you find the best place to set-up your loading zone, contact your local police or sheriff's department - they will be happy to assist you.*

## EVALUATE THE TRAFFIC PATTERNS

Be aware of how automobile traffic moves through and around the parking lot and the streets surrounding it and the field. What kind of pull-offs are there, if any? Is it a high traffic area where kids are in danger from moving traffic? Are there parked cars on both sides of the street where it may be difficult for motorists to see kids crossing? Answering these kinds of questions will help you better evaluate the safety needs of everyone concerned.

## SPEEDSTER REMEDIES

Slow down motorists by placing temporary signs in the parking lot warning them that their reduced speed is appreciated. Signs that announce *Children at Play* or *Slow: Children* will help lighten those lead feet. Take a proactive stand with your local city council, safety boards and park boards to put in speed bumps or road signs, etc. that may be necessary to slow traffic.

## HEAVY TRAFFIC

Fields located near a busy intersection may need additional traffic lights, better crossing signals or maybe added stop signs, etc. Practices are often held after school and that means rush hour! Again, talk and work closely with local agencies and local government departments to make certain **all** safety needs are being met to protect the kids.

## LIGHTING CONDITIONS

A lack of proper lighting is a major safety concern. Make sure that there is adequate lighting so pedestrians and bicyclists can be *spotted easily* and *from a distance* by motorists. For added safety-insurance, put reflective tape on clothing and reflectors on bicycles to improve visibility.

## POTHoles & CRACKED ROADS

Cracked, crumbling concrete and asphalt are hazardous to everyone: pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. Don't wait for someone else to do something about roads and parking lots that need repair, bring it to the immediate attention of your local city council, traffic and/or parks department - **Pave the Way to Improved Street Safety!**

## **Is Heading Safe ? - Heading should be introduced and taught properly to players at the appropriate age and time.**



Heading should be introduced and taught properly to players at the appropriate age and time. Introduction of heading at an early age or improper heading at any age may be linked to certain kinds of temporary or long-term effects.

While scientific evidence is preliminary, some studies indicate that young players who head too early in their physical development are susceptible to potential risks, including risks to the skull, neck, and spine. In addition, soft and connective tissues, such as those associated with the brain, may be affected under some circumstances, too.

### **Improper heading at any age may expose a player to risk.**

Studies indicate soccer *is not* the leading source of sports injuries to the head and neck, so the act of heading should be regarded within a complete context of risk. Studies do indicate that head-to-head contact among players, head contact with the ground, and head contact with goal posts and other associated playing equipment pose a greater risk than the simple act of heading the ball. These kinds of risk are associated with most outdoor team sports.

As the level of play advances and the participant's skills increase, the proper heading techniques need to be introduced to prepare the player for proper execution. Proper techniques can first be learned through the use of rag, nerf, and inflatable balls, thus avoiding unnecessary, repetitive heading of a regulation soccer ball.

When a real soccer ball is used to simulate game conditions during practice, its use should be of limited duration and repetition. Players who demonstrate a fear of the ball should be shown appropriate ball control techniques that do not force them to head the ball before they are ready.

Heading represents a player's earliest opportunity to play an air ball. It also causes more apprehension than any other soccer skill, particularly with younger players. Therefore, the coach needs to be concerned with the apprehension and the poor technique, which may result. A general rule of thumb to follow is to start teaching heading when a players show an interest, not when the coach thinks it should be taught.

**Teach the skill of heading correctly.** Remember to use a Nerf®-type ball, a rag ball, or an under inflated ball to start heading for the comfort and security of young players. Teach your players to prepare to head the ball using the following reminders:



- Keep your eye on the ball.
- Place your body so that your forehead will meet the ball.
- Take a comfortable stance with knees bent.
- Keep your eyes open.
- Keep your mouth closed.
- Keep your chin tucked.
- Keep a rigid neck.
- Use your arms for balance.

Teach your players how to contact the ball using the following techniques:

- Contact the ball with the forehead.
- Your legs should propel your body from your waist to head the ball.
- Your neck should be kept rigid.
- Follow through toward the target.
- Once you head the ball, put your body back into a position where you can then go to the next move.

**Never have an unwilling player head the ball.** He or she will not head in a game, why force them to at practice? Also don't have children do headers over and over again.

To sum it all up;

- **introduce heading at an appropriate age level,**
- **teach the skill correctly,**
- **never force a player to head the ball,**
- **limit the amount of times a child heads the ball.**

---

Courtesy John Oullette - Director of Coaching American Youth Soccer Organization.

# Beating the Heat

Heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke are all serious (in some cases fatal) heat-induced conditions. It is imperative for the safety of your players and volunteers that you and your coaches know how to identify and treat them.



## Heat Cramps

When a body loses too much water and salt through sweat, muscles tend to cramp (particularly in the abdomen and legs). Players suffering from these painful "heat cramps" should:

- ☐ Rest in a shady spot.
- ☐ Sip one glass of cool water every 15 minutes until the pain relents. If the player's parents are on hand, have them help by massaging the affected muscles.
- ☐ Applying cool wet cloths to help relax the muscles.

## Heat Exhaustion

Players with cool, moist, or flushed skin, heavy sweating, headache, nausea, dizziness, or muscle cramps may be experiencing heat exhaustion. This condition occurs when, because of high humidity or restrictive clothing, sweat is not properly evaporated and the body cannot cool down. To assist a player experiencing heat exhaustion:

- ☐ Have the player lie down in a shady spot and elevate his or her feet.
- ☐ Remove the child's shoes, shin guards, and socks.
- ☐ Apply cold packs to the armpit and scalp areas.
- ☐ Have the player drink water or an electrolyte solution.
- ☐ Dampen the player's skin with cool cloths.
- ☐ Fan the player to help evaporate excess sweat.
- ☐ Remove the player's shirt.
- ☐ Apply cold packs to the groin area.

## Heat Stroke

When a body completely loses the ability to cool itself, the internal temperature continues to rise resulting in heat stroke. If a player's temperature rises too quickly, brain damage and/or death may result. Players suffering from heat stroke may have hot, dry skin -- those with fair complexions may appear red, while darker-skinned individuals may appear gray. Victims may also experience a very rapid pulse and extremely high body temperature. In some cases, victims of heat stroke may seem confused, unresponsive, or even suffer from seizures. Recovery from heatstroke depends on the amount of time it takes to return the body temperature to normal, so immediate medical attention is imperative.

If you suspect that a player is suffering from heat stroke:

- ☐ Call 911 immediately.
- ☐ Follow the recommended treatment for heat exhaustion.
- ☐ DO NOT attempt to give any liquids.
- ☐ Contact the player's parents. Professional soccer players lose seven and a half pounds of sweat during a game. In order to avoid serious heat-induced conditions, players must drink enough fluids to replace that sweat. Every player should carry his or her own sports bottle to practice, and coaches need to stop for drink breaks every 15 minutes during the summer.

## Symptoms of dehydration may include:

- ☐ Dry lips and tongue.
- ☐ Sunken eyes.
- ☐ Dizziness or a loss of energy. In addition to staying hydrated, wearing loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in light colors will help keep the body cool. Coaches must remember to conduct shorter, easier practices in the summer.

## **What You Need to Know about Fluids -**

### **Water makes up 60 percent of your total body weight and 70 percent of your muscles.**



#### **What Does Water Do For You?**

Water is an important nutrient for athletes. Water makes up 60 percent of your total body weight and 70 percent of your muscles. Without enough water, you can't work at your top level of performance and you may even harm yourself. Water cools your body. As you exercise, your body temperature increased (even when it's cold outside). As your temperature increases, you sweat. When the sweat evaporates from your skin, your body cools down.

#### **What Happens Without Water?**

Dehydration. If you start exercising without having enough water in your body, or if you sweat during practice and do not replace the water lost, you may become dehydrated. You can become dehydrated even when you lose just a few pounds as sweat. Once you become dehydrated, you can no longer sweat and get rid of the heat that builds up in your body.

Dehydration can be dangerous. The first symptoms of dehydration include thirst, chills, clammy skin, throbbing heartbeat, and nausea. When you become more dehydrated, you may develop a headache, cramps, and shortness of breath, dizziness, and/or dryness in the mouth. At the most serious level of dehydration, you can experience hallucinations, deafness, visual problems, swollen tongue, and/or kidney failure.

### How Can You Avoid Dehydration?

- Drink plenty of cool fluids before, during, and after practice and competition. Even if you don't feel thirsty.
- Drink 1 to 1 1/2 cups of cool fluid 15 minutes before competition or practice.
- Drink 1/2 cup of fluid every 10-15 minutes during the event.
- Don't rely on thirst alone as a guide to how much water your body needs. Weigh yourself before and after exercising. For every pound lost as sweat, drink two cups of fluid.
- Avoid salt tablets. Too much salt increases your body's water needs. Salt tablets can also irritate your stomach and cause nausea.
- Avoid working out in plastic or rubber suits. They can cause serious dehydration, limit your performance, and lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

### What Happens If Your Sweat Doesn't Evaporate?

For your body to cool down, two things must occur. You must sweat and the sweat must evaporate from your skin. If the sweat doesn't evaporate quickly enough to cool your body down, you can become overheated. This can happen when the weather is hot and humid or when you are wearing heavy gear. You can avoid problems by following these tips when exercising during hot, humid weather:

- Exercise at the coolest time of the day--early morning or late evening. Avoid the middle of the day when the temperature is usually the highest. If you must practice then, build up your tolerance to heat by working out for a short time each day. Gradually increase the length of each workout.
- Wear the lightest clothing and equipment you can. Mesh jerseys, lightweight shorts, and low-cut socks allow more sweat to evaporate than sweat suits and heavy gear.
- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after practice and competition.
- When you exercise in cold weather, your body still sweats. To keep warm and still allow the sweat to evaporate, wear several layers of loose clothing. Layers of clothing will trap the warmth from your body while absorbing your sweat. If you become too warm, a layer can be removed and remember; drink water even in cold weather.

# Lighting Policy



## Before the storm ...

- Check weather forecasts before going to your game.
- Watch for signs of an approaching storm such as distant lightning and darkening, towering clouds.
- Make sure you have access to Radio (for weather updates) at your athletic field complex or any other outdoor venue.
- Look for environmental clues such as dark clouds and strong winds that may signal a severe thunderstorm. When you hear a warning, take appropriate action.

## When you hear thunder ...

- Anytime lightning is visible, then all players, coaches, fans and officials should **Take Shelter Immediately!**. Move inside a sturdy building for greater protection. Avoid picnic or rain shelters.
- Once inside a building, close all windows and outside doors. Stay off the telephone and stay away from doors, windows, electrical outlets and metal pipes.
- If you cannot get to a building, seek shelter in an automobile with a metal roof. Close all windows and doors, and avoid touching any inside metal.
- Flash (Bang) Method - Count seconds between lightning flash and thunder and divide by 5 - this gives the distance of lightning in miles.
- If count is 30 seconds or less stay inside.

## Soccer Games and practices ...

- Soccer fields are dangerous places during a thunderstorm. Because lightning tends to strike the tallest object, metal bleachers, fences, light poles, field goal posts or soccer goal posts are especially hazardous. When lightning hits these objects, the charge travels through the metal, shocking anyone in its path. Lightning can also "splash" or "ricochet" off these objects and strike nearby people.

## If caught outdoors and you cannot get to a building ...

- Find a low spot away from trees, fences and poles.
- If you are near the woods, take shelter under the shorter trees or low brush.
- If you feel your skin tingle or hair stand on end, squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Place your hands over your ears to protect your hearing from the sound of a close thunderclap. You want to make yourself the smallest possible target while minimizing your contact with the ground.
- If anyone is struck by lightning (players, coaches, fans or referees)  
**CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.**
- People struck by lightning carry no electrical charge and can be handled safely.
- The injured person has received an electrical shock and may be burned, both where they were struck and where the electricity left their body. Check for burns in both places.
- Give first aid. If breathing has stopped, begin rescue breathing. If the heart has stopped beating, a trained person should give CPR.

## When to resume outdoor play ...

- Return to your activities at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder or flash of lightning.

## Learn First Aid and CPR

Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR course. Call your local Red Cross chapter for class schedules and fees.

---

*Courtesy VDEM*