

## Sportsgrounds, Activities and Equipment

Sporting activities are an important part of every school and college curriculum, providing students with the opportunity to improve their fitness and form long lasting friendships with others.

However, no matter how fit or athletic your students may be, no one is immune to sustaining injuries on the sporting field.

Whilst sport is an important part of every school and college curriculum, it is important to remember that sporting activities come with risks, risks that can produce a range of injuries from minor cuts and scrapes through to broken bones and life-threatening conditions.

By its very nature, the harsh and often unpredictable Australian climate can leave sporting grounds cracked, hard and dry in summer and potholed and soggy in winter, creating slip, trip, fall and impact hazards for students, teachers and the public alike. Unpadded goalposts pose a hazard because students can and often do crash or fall into them during vigorous sporting activities. Whilst wearing ill-fitting protective gear or using out-dated sporting equipment can also result in a range of injuries.

In the interest of injury prevention, risks associated with sports activities, sports surfaces and equipment need to be managed.

Obviously, schools and colleges cannot influence the weather or wrap their students in cottonwool, but they can reduce their risk exposures and lessen the number and severity of student injuries, by implementing standard risk management practices within their sporting environment.

### Taking a risk management approach

Managing the risks associated with sportsgrounds and ground surfaces should be no different to managing health and safety risks in other business areas. It is important to begin by identifying your hazards.

Where hazards are identified, conduct a risk assessment considering the exposure, likelihood, severity and consequence of each risk.

E.g. Sportsgrounds and Equipment Risks

Scenario	Risk	Risk Ranking
Unsuitable sporting facilities	Injury to users or third parties	High
Cracked/hard ground surfaces	Trip/injuries	Medium-High
Goalposts without padding	Student runs or is pushed into the goalposts	High

*Please consult AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines for detailed information on risk assessments*

### Risk controls

- Assess the suitability and size of the playing field for each sport played. (Refer to the peak sporting body in your state or territory for the recommended minimum sizes for relevant sports.)
- Consider the surrounding buildings, car parks, traffic and immediate areas when determining if the ground is suitable for the sport being played.
- Assess the existing fencing to determine if the sport being played is appropriate. Consider if sports equipment could potentially injure a by-stander or damage property such as cars due to inadequate fencing.
- Conduct and record regular inspections of outdoor sporting surfaces and equipment.
- Ensure that off-site sporting locations are inspected prior to use.
- Allocate financial resources to the maintenance of sports grounds.
- Allocate responsibility for inspection and maintenance of sports grounds to a nominated staff member.
- Implement a process for reporting hazards and maintenance issues.
- Record safety improvements and maintenance repairs.

- Cordon off hazardous areas and install appropriate signage until the hazard is rectified.
- Relocate sports activities to grounds or facilities deemed to be in a safe condition if the school oval is found to be in poor condition.
- Ensure there is adequate run-off distance between the boundary line and fence or other structures. This allows students enough space between playing areas and fences to slow down. (Refer to the peak sporting bodies for recommended run-off distances.)
- Ensure adequate padding is secured to goalposts prior to playing sports. Padding should be of a height and width in accordance with the peak sporting body's recommendations and be in good condition.
- Include goalposts and goalpost pads in the regular inspection and maintenance program.
- Remove any unsafe goalposts, cordon off the area and install relevant signage until they are made safe.
- Ensure portable goalposts are installed in accordance with the Australian Standard AS 4866.1-2007 Playing field equipment – Soccer goals – Safety aspects.
- Conduct regular maintenance on all outdoor sport surfaces. Over time synthetic surfaces may require replacement and turf may require rejuvenation.
- Engage a suitably qualified person to determine the specific maintenance requirements of your school's outdoor surfaces.
- Ensure adequately stocked first aid kits are available and provide qualified first aiders during sporting activities
- Educate students on not only the rules of the game, but also on general safety during play
- Do not let injured students participate in physical activity
- Provide personal protective equipment for students where required
- Ensure that students warm up before activities
- When compiling your sports curriculum ensure that you take into consideration the physical abilities, strengths, limitations and age of students and design a program that is appropriate
- Keep a record of all injuries and ensure that the appropriate first aid is provided to injured students immediately
- Ensure students complete medical permission forms and that these are signed by their parent/guardian and kept on file
- Verify that students requiring medications such as asthmatics have brought the medication with them
- Apply a blood rule making sure students with cuts are excluded from play until cuts have been attended to
- Make sure participants bring water and ensure they stay adequately hydrated
- Exclude students from playing contact sports like rugby and Australian Rules Football if they do not bring their mouthguard
- If hiring a venue for sporting activities, it is recommended you consult Catholic Church Insurances for further information before signing hire agreements and contracts

### Monitoring and review

Ensure that controls are monitored and reviewed at regular intervals to ascertain continued effectiveness. Controls deemed inadequate or ineffective should be improved upon.

By instituting diligent and dedicated risk management practices for sporting grounds, equipment and ground surfaces, schools and colleges can reduce injury occurrence among students and staff, enhance reputations and support the physical growth and development of their students by encouraging safe sporting activities.

## Further Information/Resources

The Australian Sports Commission

[www.ausport.gov.au](http://www.ausport.gov.au)

Sports Medicine Australia

[www.sma.org.au](http://www.sma.org.au)

Sport and Recreation Victoria

[www.sport.vic.gov.au](http://www.sport.vic.gov.au)

## Standards and Regulations

Australian Standard HB 49.2-1993 Sporting Facilities Manual  
– Sporting Surfaces.

Australian Standard HB 246-2004 Guidelines for Managing  
Risk in Sport and Recreation

State OH&S Acts and Regulations

Wrongs Act 1958

To obtain a copy of the sample Sportsgrounds, Activities  
and Equipment Checklist please phone Catholic Church  
Insurance's Risk Management helpdesk on 1 300 660 827 or  
alternatively email [riskmanagement@ccinsurances.com.au](mailto:riskmanagement@ccinsurances.com.au)

To discuss your insurance options in relation to sporting  
activities or take out a **SchoolCare** policy please contact your  
Account Executive on 1 800 011 028.

**For assistance with risk management please call  
the Risk Management Helpdesk on**

**1 300 660 827**

**[www.ccinsurances.com.au](http://www.ccinsurances.com.au)**

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