

NEWS

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NOCSAE urges athletes and parents to get the facts about football helmets and concussion protection

OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS, Feb. 4, 2011 – The National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) issued a warning to athletes and parents of athletes to get the facts about football helmets and concussion protection – and not rely solely on marketing and promotional materials. NOCSAE is an independent and nonprofit standard-setting body with the sole mission of enhancing athletic safety through scientific research and the creation of performance standards for protective equipment.

“As we all prepare for the Super Bowl, football’s biggest celebration of the season, there is one fundamental fact every athlete and parent of an athlete needs to know: no football helmet can prevent all concussions,” said Mike Oliver, NOCSAE executive director. “Because of the efforts of researchers, manufacturers and others, the progression and improvement of football helmets over the last 20 years has been remarkable. We have no doubt that technology will continue to improve. But claims or representations that a particular helmet is anti-concussive or concussion-proof, without scientific support, can be misleading and dangerous.”

For the most reliable information regarding helmets and concussion protection and prevention, NOCSAE encourages athletes and parents to carefully review:

- Hang tags that come with all new football helmets that address the helmet’s abilities and limitations
- Informational booklets developed by manufacturers that contain critical information about the helmet’s abilities and limitations
- Warning information that is prominently affixed to the exterior of every helmet
- Free downloadable resources created by the Centers for Disease Control regarding concussion recognition, response and prevention. Those resources can be found at www.cdc.gov/concussion/sports/

While football helmets certified to the NOCSAE standard play an incredibly important role in protecting athletes on the field of play, they are not the only approach to protecting against concussion. Prevention, diagnosis, treatment and trained medical management for decisions about when a concussed athlete can return to play are equally important. NOCSAE offers the following recommendations for athletes, parents and coaches:

- Read and understand the warning labels on your helmet. No helmet can prevent all head injuries. Helmets do not protect against neck injuries. If you were not provided the hang tags and literature that come with every new football helmet certified to the NOCSAE standard, contact the manufacturer of the helmet and obtain copies of that information.
- Football helmets certified to the NOCSAE standard do protect against some concussions, but contact in football may result in a concussion or brain injury that no helmet can prevent.
- The certification on the back of each football helmet that states "Manufacturer Certifies Meets NOCSAE Standard" and the NOCSAE football helmet logo mean that helmet model has passed a very thorough and rigorous impact testing protocol using state-of-the-art equipment. Even with that certification and compliance, there is no football helmet standard, including the NOCSAE standard, that will prevent all concussions.
- A helmet that is older than two years also should be reconditioned and recertified to the NOCSAE standard. Helmets that have been recertified will have a recertification statement and label inside the helmet indicating the name of the recertifying company and the date of recertification. If you have doubts, ask your coach or school administrator about their policy for reconditioning and recertifying football helmets.
- Do not use the helmet to hit or strike an opponent. Such actions violate rules of play, as well as substantially increase the chance of incurring a concussion or other serious head or a neck injury. These injuries could include permanent paralysis and even death.
- Become familiar with the signs and symptoms of concussions, which can include headache, nausea, confusion, dizziness and memory difficulties, and encourage all athletes to report symptoms. If a concussion has been diagnosed, do not return to play until cleared by medically trained experts following published return-to-play guidelines. Remember, if in doubt, sit it out.



"Commissioning research and establishing standards for athletic equipment, where feasible, and encouraging dissemination of research findings on athletic equipment and sports injuries."

The National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment

Based on the best available science, NOCSAE has established the most rigorous standards for football helmet performance. The standard mandates that football helmets be tested across multiple levels of impact and impact locations. The organization warns that even though helmets face rigorous testing and demanding performance standards, concussions still occur. More scientific data is critical to learn why and how better to protect athletes against concussions without creating the possibility for other injuries. Since 2000, NOCSAE has invested more than \$3 million toward understanding sport-related concussions and supporting research by the foremost experts in sports medicine and science to develop and advance athlete safety.

For more information, please visit www.nocsa.org.

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About NOCSAE

NOCSAE, the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment, is an independent and nonprofit standard-setting body with the sole mission to enhance athletic safety through scientific research and the creation of performance standards for protective equipment. Formed in 1969, NOCSAE is a leading force in the effort to improve athletic equipment and, as a result, reduce injuries. NOCSAE efforts include the development of performance and test standards for football helmets and facemasks, baseball and softball batters and catchers helmets, baseballs and softballs, ice hockey helmets, soccer shin guards, lacrosse helmets and facemasks and polo helmets. NOCSAE is comprised of representatives from a number of groups which have an interest in athletic equipment – including manufacturers, reconditioners, athletic trainers, coaches, equipment managers, sports medicine and consumer organizations. These diverse interests have joined forces in an attempt to arrive at a common goal of reducing sports-related injuries. NOCSAE is a nonprofit, charitable organization supported by individuals and organizations with an interest in athletics.