SECTION VII: FACILITY AND EQUIPMENT SAFETY

In soccer, the grounds and facilities need to be appropriate and the equipment needs to be in good condition for the well–being and safety of the participants. It is extremely important that the soccer field is in good condition otherwise it will increase the risk of injuries. For example, a soccer game played on an uneven field with holes will increase the likelihood of players rolling an ankle, losing balance and colliding with another player, or even falling hard to the ground.

To enhance safe participation, it is important to:

- Check and maintain the surface of the field to remove hazards
- Replace balls once their water–resistant qualities are lost
- Use appropriate sized balls for the age and gender of players

A sample Field Inspection Sheet for use in assessing and reporting the quality of the field is included in Section 13.9.

Portable Goal Safety

Too many serious injuries and fatalities have occurred in recent years as a result of unsafe or incorrect use of goalposts. Safety is always of paramount importance and everyone in soccer must play their part to prevent similar incidents occurring in the future.

- For safety reasons goalposts of any size (including those which are portable and not installed permanently at a pitch or practice field) must always be anchored securely to the ground.
- Portable goalposts must be secured by the use of chain anchors or appropriate anchor weights to prevent them from toppling forward.
- It is essential that under no circumstances children or adults should be allowed to climb, swing on, or play with the structures of the goalposts.
- Particular attention is drawn to the fact that if not properly assembled and secured, portable goalposts may topple over.
- Portable goalposts should not be left in place after use. They should be dismantled and removed to a place of secure storage.
- It is strongly recommended that nets should only be secured by plastic hooks or tape and not by metal cup hooks. Any metal cup hooks should if possible be removed and replaced. New goalposts should not be purchased if they include metal cup hooks which cannot be replaced.
- Goalposts which are "home–made", or which have been altered from their original size or construction should not be used. These have been the cause of a number of deaths and injuries.
- Guidelines to prevent toppling: Follow manufacturer's guide–lines in assembling goalposts. Before use, Coaches should test the goals following the guidelines below:
  - Ensure each goal is anchored securely in its place
  - Exert a significant downward force on the cross bar
  - Exert a significant backward force on both upright posts
  - Exert a significant forward force on both upright posts

Blood

An athlete who is bleeding, has an open wound, has any amount of blood on his/her uniform, or has blood on his/her person, shall be directed to leave the game until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform and/or body is appropriately cleaned, and/or the uniform is changed before returning to competition.

Jewelry

Players are not permitted to wear anything that is dangerous to themselves or other players. NO jewelry: that includes rings, bracelets (except medical alert bracelets — which must be either made of Velcro or similar soft material, or covered with a sweatband), earrings, necklaces, other visible body piercing, etc. The practice of taping jewelry is not acceptable.

Headscarf and Turban

At its meeting on October 2, 2012, the International Football Association Board (IFAB) approved the amendments Law 4 –The Players' Equipment ("headscarf"). The decision of the IFAB regarding the use of headscarves comes into effect immediately.

IFAB Decision:

As outlined in Law 4 of the FIFA Laws of the Game, where head covers (excluding goalkeepers' caps) are worn, they must:

- be black or the same main colour as the shirt (provided that the players of the same team wear the same colour)
- be in keeping with the professional appearance of the player's equipment • not be attached to the shirt
- not be dangerous to the player wearing it or any other player (e.g. opening/closing mechanism around neck)
- not have any part(s) extending out from the surface (protruding elements)

Other headscarves are also permitted provided the above criteria are met.

Players Wearing Casts Policy

This policy is designed to reduce inconsistencies in rulings over players wearing casts. All referees are expected to follow these policies in all matches sanctioned by Canada Soccer

Law 4 states that a player may not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous [to anyone].

It further states that non–dangerous protective equipment is permitted as long as it has the sole purpose of protecting the individual physically, providing it poses no danger to the individual or any other player.

Modern protective equipment made of soft, lightweight, padded materials are not considered dangerous and are therefore permitted.

Hard casts are considered to pose a danger to both the wearer and other players and are not permitted to be worn. The practice of padding a hard cast does not reduce the element of danger.

Players wearing a soft cast will be permitted to play if the cast does not present a danger to the individual or any other player.

The referee or Supervisor of Officials (if one has been appointed to the match/tournament) will make the final decision as to the acceptability of any cast.

Any player who uses a cast with the intent to intimidate or injure an opponent shall be sent off.

Player Insulin Pump Policy

This policy is designed to reduce inconsistencies in rulings over players with diabetes who wear an insulin pump. All referees are expected to follow these policies in all matches sanctioned by Canada Soccer.

An insulin pump is designed to ensure that the player maintains a proper blood glucose level during the game. An extended period without infusion of insulin may result in hyperglycemia (excess sugar in the blood).

Law 4 states that a player may not use equipment that is dangerous to him/herself or another player. This is further expanded upon in the interpretations of the Laws of the Game whereby it is advised that player may use equipment that has the sole purpose of protecting the individual physically providing that it poses no danger to the individual or any other player.

A player wearing an insulin pump because of a medical condition is permitted to play providing he/she has received written medical clearance and is able to provide the referee with a note indicating such. The pump itself must not present a danger to the individual or any other player.

Lightning Safety/Severe Weather

When thunder roars, go indoors!

The safety of players, coaches, management, and spectators is the primary concern in any weather event that occurs during all matches sanctioned by Canada Soccer. By understanding and following the below information, the safety of everyone shall be greatly increased. Ultimately, the referee has the final say over delaying or restarting a match due to weather. Waiting to stop play or not waiting to start play may result in a serious injury or loss of life. Referees are expected to act responsibly when dealing with such events during matches they are controlling.

If you can hear thunder, you can get hit by lightning. As soon as you hear thunder, quickly get to a safe location. More people are struck before and after a thunderstorm than during one. Stay inside for 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder.

Additional Information

Please note the following recommendations from Environment Canada:

- **To plan for a safe day, check the weather forecast first**. If thunderstorms are forecast, avoid being outdoors at that time or make an alternate plan. Identify safe places and determine how long it will take you to reach them.
- **Watch the skies for developing thunderstorms and listen for thunder**. As soon as you hear thunder, quickly get to a safe location. If you can hear thunder, you are in danger of being hit by lightning. More people are struck before and after a thunderstorm than during one.
- **Get to a safe place.** A safe location is a fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning. If no sturdy building is close by, get into a metal–roofed vehicle and close all the windows.
- **Do not handle electrical equipment, telephones or plumbing**. These are all electrical conductors. Using a computer or wired video game system, taking a bath or touching a metal window frame all put you at risk of being struck by lightning. Use battery–operated appliances only.
- **If caught outdoors far from shelter, stay away from tall objects**. This includes trees, poles, wires and fences. Take shelter in a low–lying area but be on the alert for possible flooding.

Be aware of how close lightning is occurring. Thunder always accompanies lightning, even though its audible range can be diminished due to background noise in the immediate environment and its distance from the observer.

When larger groups are involved, the time needed to properly evacuate an area increases. As time requirements change, the distance at which lightning is noted and considered a threat to move into the area must be increased.

Know where the closest "safe structure or location" is to the field or playing area and know how long it takes to get to that safe structure or location. Safe structure or location is defined as:

- Any building normally occupied or frequently used by people, i.e., a building with plumbing and / or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure. Avoid using shower facilities for safe shelter and do not use the showers or plumbing facilities during a thunderstorm.

In the absence of a sturdy, frequently inhabited building, any vehicle with a hard metal roof (not a convertible or golf cart) and rolled–up windows can provide a measure of safety. A vehicle is certainly better than remaining outdoors. It is not the rubber tires that make a vehicle a safe shelter, but the hard metal roof which dissipates the lightning strike around the vehicle. Do not touch the sides of any vehicle!

If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of the feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head. Minimize contact with the ground because lightning current often enters a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike. Minimize your body's surface area and the ground! Do not lie flat! If unable to reach safe shelter, stay away from the tallest trees or objects such as light poles or flag poles), metal objects (such as fences or bleachers), individual trees, standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid being the highest object in a field. Do not take shelter under a single, tall tree.

Avoid using the telephone, except in emergency situations. People have been struck by lightning while using a land–line telephone. A cellular phone or a portable remote phone is a safe alternative to land–line phones, if the person and the antenna are located within a safe structure or location, and if all other precautions are followed.

When considering resumption of any athletics activity, wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field.

First aid for lightning victims

Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning strikes.

- Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge and can be safely handled.
- Call for help. Victims may be suffering from burns or shock and should receive medical attention immediately. Call 9–1–1 or your local ambulance service.
- Give first aid. If breathing has stopped, administer cardio–pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Use an automatic external defibrillator if one is available.

For additional information the following websites are helpful:

https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/lightning/safety/overview.html

www.weatheroffice.gc.ca/lightning