



Safety and Risk Management for Officials

Officials have a duty to take reasonable care to avoid injury to participants and this includes keeping up to date on the rules of the game, particularly rules relating to safety aspects.

Duties of care of an official:

- Duty to enforce the rules
- Duty to protect participants
- Duty to warn participants of dangers
- Duty to ensure that the sport can be conducted safely
- Duty to control and supervise the competition.

Participants in sport will be taken to consent to the risks of injury from activities that are “within the sport”. What is regarded “within the sport” at a professional (eg national league) level may be different to what is “within the sport” at a local level.

Risk management tips for officials:

- Always inspect and clear the playing field or arena of visible dangers. Consider reducing the size of the playing field if necessary (eg if broken glass was found in the “in goal” area of a football ground it is difficult to know that all the glass has been picked up so consider shortening the field);
- Cancel the contest or event if there is inclement or dangerous weather (eg extreme heat or thunder storms where lightning is likely);
- Inspect and control use of both competition and protective equipment;
- Enforce the rules of the sport and control the conduct of participants (a warning to “tone down” behaviour before things get out of hand can be effective);
- Be able to provide basic first aid if required and to deal appropriately with potential and actual injuries;
- Keep an officiating diary and record any incidents that occur during a competition;
- Seek regular evaluation of your performance and make sure you know about changes to the rules;
- Undertake a course on “conflict management”;
- Ensure you have a “balance” in your life and give yourself sufficient time away from officiating to avoid “burn out”;
- Have insurance to cover both if a claim is made against you and also to cover medical expenses or lost income if you are injured.

Many associations have insurance that will cover an official (both claims against the official and claims by the official). Find out what insurance cover there is so that you can determine whether or not you wish to take out additional insurance.