

PROMOTING Effective Emergency Action Plans

By Kim Brock, MS, ATC; David Gallegos, MA, ATC; Erin Schneider

An All-too-common Occurrence

You are watching your high school girls' soccer team dominate the opponent. All of a sudden, an opposing forward breaks through your defense and shoots. The goalie reaches out, blocks the shot, goes down and does not get back up. The game stops and your staff runs onto the field. As staff members take care of your downed goalie, you bring the rest of your team together to talk strategy, keep focus and reassure them.

Ten minutes go by and emergency vehicles arrive, but you wonder why it is taking them so long. A car is blocking the emergency entrance. People are scrambling to find the owner of the car so EMTs can access the field. Twenty minutes go by before the car is finally moved. The team is on edge, you are on edge and the parents are on edge. Forty-five minutes pass before the athlete is transported!

As important members of the sports medicine team, how can coaches and athletic directors help avoid this situation?

Emergency Action Plan Basics

By definition, the emergency action plan is the set of policies and procedures that are set in place when an emergency occurs. A basic EAP should address the following basics:

- Knowledge of all access points to facilities
- Predetermined access routes and identified members to assist in directing EMS
- Quick access to keys needed to open access points
- Identification of members responsible for activating EMS
- Periodic communication with EMS staff to review and practice procedures
- Selection of spectator shelter sites
- Procedures for crowd control
- Education of parents and athletes

A Coach's Role

The coach's role as a parent communicator is critical in minimizing confusion and misperceptions. Preseason meetings can be useful in addressing these concerns. Educating the parents on both your roles and their roles in emergency



situations is critical. Discussion can include approved parking during games and practices, required health and emergency paperwork, parent expectations and identification and introduction of coaching staff.

Only 40 percent of high schools have a certified athletic trainer; therefore, the coach may be the one called upon to provide actual care when an athlete is injured. Keeping current CPR/AED and first-aid certifications is important for this reason.

Making sure athletes have updated physicals and emergency contact cards is the easiest way to prevent delays in emergency care as well as minimizing school district liability. Copies of the emergency contact cards should travel with the team during away events. Card information should include parents' numbers and addresses.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- EAPs are simple and effective
- Sample emergency contact card included
- Only 40% of high schools have a dedicated medical staff
- Coaches and athletic directors assume large responsibilities

Allergies and insurance information. This information is extremely important as it is commonly required prior to initiation of hospital care.



If you have an athletic trainer on staff, the coach may still be called upon. Serious and rare injuries such as concussions and cervical spine trauma can require up to seven people to assist in stabilization and transport. Proper technique is critical in maintaining the health and safety of the athlete. It is the responsibility of the team, as directed by the EAP, to routinely practice teamwork situations.

An Athletic Director's Role

Athletic directors often play a broader role in emergencies. Responsibilities can include maintaining EMS access points, helping to direct spectators and communicating with the opponent staff, public and media.

An important component to consider is the policy for assisting injured spectators while coaching staff are dedicated to an event. It is not uncommon for emergencies to arise in the stands such as falls and exacerbation of existing medical conditions. EMS coverage and school hazard teams might be useful resources for such circumstances.

They are also responsible for establishing school policy that ensures staff resources and education are available to handle emergency situations. This can include in-service dates for staff first aid and CPR training, securing contracts for EMS availability at large events and purchasing equipment such as an AED.

A major benefit of the athletic director's role is his or her ability to quickly and accurately communicate. E-mailing opposing schools directions to facilities, parking locations for both the team and spectators and medical staff available to assist them for upcoming events is a good idea. Communications like this help prevent confusion in emergency situations and represent the school and team as organized and professional.

An athletic director will also be called upon to act as a public relations spokesperson in the event of an emergency. Knowing what and how to communicate while minimizing legalities is important.

Conclusion

Education and communication within the sports medicine team is important. Establishing and practicing roles is crucial to an effective emergency action plan. It can help avoid potential catastrophic events and delays in emergency services. The emergency action plan is the simplest and most efficient method available to provide a safe sports environment. **CQ**

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EMERGENCY INFORMATION CARD

(PLEASE PRINT)

Student's Name: _____ Grade _____
Last First Middle

Home Phone No. _____ Birth Date ____/____/____ Age _____
Mo./Day /Yr.

Mailing Address: _____
(P.O., Box, Street, Ave., Rt., Rd.)

(City, State, Zip Code)

Allergies, medications or medical problems _____

Family Doctor Name: _____ Phone No. _____

INSURANCE INFORMATION:

Is this student covered by the insurance offered at the school YES ___ NO ___

List all HEALTH insurance plans that covers this student

Company Name: _____ Policy Number _____

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS:

Father (work) _____ Mother (work) _____

If parents or guardian are not available, contact:

1. Name _____ Phone No. _____

2. Name _____ Phone No. _____

3. Name _____ Phone No. _____

We give our consent for the athletic trainers, coaches, and/or attending physicians to use their own judgment in treating, rendering care, securing additional medical care, or calling for an ambulance. We also give our consent to hospitals to render any medical treatments or services deemed necessary.

Signature _____ Date _____
(Parent or Guardian)