

## **Protecting Our Children**

The safety of children in the CanSkate program is our number one concern. The National Office frequently deals with questions regarding safety helmets and the types to be used while on the ice as part of a CanSkate program at a Skate Canada member club or skating school. Through discussion with the Skate Canada's insurance brokers, BF. Lorenzetti & Associates Inc., the following information was learned.

Selecting a proper CSA approved helmet should be the most important criteria when selecting the right helmet for your child. Owning a CSA approved helmet should be paramount to all other reasoning (including comfort or convenience) as to the type of helmet to wear or not to wear. The coverage of the head that is provided by a CSA approved hockey helmet is by far the best; a bicycle helmet, in comparison, does not give full coverage around the entire head. The concern with any helmet other than an approved hockey helmet is the lack of protection on the lower portions of the head that have a tendency to be injured. It should also be noted that a hockey helmet is designed to withstand repeated bumps and protect against penetration. A bicycle helmet once involved in an accident should be discarded.

Consideration should also be given to further protection by installing face protectors on the front of the helmets. Although face protectors are not essential, chin guards are highly recommended in the CanSkate program due to certain skating skills that are required at that level. Claims received by our insurance company have also shown that eye protection would also be beneficial.

Some clubs have made it mandatory for all CanSkate members to wear helmets. This is a good step, but clubs should also go one step further to tell parents to insure that the helmet is a CSA approved hockey helmet with a face protector. For the sake of protecting our children from potential injury, all clubs should consider endorsing a policy such as this.

Questions are often also raised about the potential of voiding warranties or denial of Liability claims when the use or application of stickers onto hockey helmets has occurred. All helmets have a disclaimer label outlining the intent not to be responsible if the helmet is altered in anyway. The rationale behind this disclaimer is quite simple. Manufacturers are concerned that the type of glues used on the labels may effect the integrity of the helmet. Some glues create an exothermic reaction which can alter the molecular composition of the plastic, therefore reducing the strength and protection of the plastic. The standard hockey helmet is tested and approved on the two sides and the back and front as well as the top of the helmet and is approved for a normal life based on the number of potential knocks. These areas of the helmet must be protected to maintain the safe integrity of the helmet.

The types of glues are specific to the types of plastic used in the manufacturing of helmets to which they are applied. For example when applying a label to a Hockey Canada (CCM or Jofa Helmets) the only acceptable glue is manufactured by Flexcon and

is a type “flexcon v156” glue that is sold to manufacturers of labels. This is the same glue used to apply the CSA label to the helmet. Previous events have proven that some labels applied to helmets have in fact had an adverse effect on the integrity of the plastic. Do not assume that this adhesive will be correct for other helmets. If you wish to apply something to your child’s helmet, call the manufacturer in order to make sure that you use the proper adhesive.

We all want to protect our children. Encourage your CanSkate parents to buy a proper CSA approved hockey helmet to secure the safety of our members.

(with input from Jim Stirling, Vice President and Dwight Tobin, Director of Risk Control, BF. Lorenzetti & Associates Inc.)

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