

AACCA Minimum Standards for Cheerleading Competition



As part of our ongoing efforts to provide for the highest standards of cheerleading safety, the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators is making these recommendations for minimum safety standards to be provided at all cheerleading competitive events. Organizations should strive to implement as many of these standards as soon as reasonably possible. As this standard may require significant effort and adjustment by groups involved in competitive events, there should be a period of time available to meet the standard. AACCA recommends that all competitive events comply with these minimums beginning in the 2010-2011 competition season.

Proper Environment:

An appropriate environment must be provided based on the skills allowed, the ability levels of the teams and the current safety rules for the levels involved in the competition. The designated performance area must have a minimum border of two feet before any drop-off or obstruction. The ceiling height must be adequate based on the level of the teams performing and the skills allowed. If the skills involved call for a mat, it should be carpet-bonded foam at a minimum of 1 - 3/8" (one and three-eighths inches) thickness. Teams should be made aware of the designated size of the performance area and the performance surface in advance of registration for the event.

Safety Rules:

Standard safety rules must be followed based on the cheerleading level of the teams involved in the competition. This would require NFHS or AACCA rules for school teams, USASF level rules for All Star Teams. Youth teams should follow the rules of their respective organizations. These rules should be made available to the teams prior to registration for the event. Avenues for verifying the legality of skills prior to the event should be made available.

Emergency Medical Procedures:

Emergency medical procedures are vital to the well-being of the participants. An Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and ambulance should be available in an emergency situation. If the venue is outside of a five-mile radius of a hospital or EMS station, the EMT/ambulance must be on-site. If the venue is within a five-mile radius of a hospital or EMS station, the EMT/ambulance can be "on call" with a Certified/Licensed Athletic Trainer or designated person with formal medical training on site to be a first responder. In any case, a site-specific Emergency Action Plan should be developed and discussed with necessary staff, including communication with any "on call" services prior to the beginning of the event.

Additional Spotters

While team spotters are already required for specific classes of skills, teams should be allowed the opportunity to provide their own additional, experienced spotters during their routine. The team may allow the competition organizers to provide additional spotters with the understanding that these spotters may not be intimately familiar with the specific routine. Competition organizers may allow teams to waive the requirement for additional spotters if the team feels that is in the best interest of safety for their team. Regardless of the spotting policy utilized, the actual policy must be made available to the teams prior to registration for the event.

These additional spotters are designated as "routine spotters" to differentiate them from "team spotters" that are part of the actual team. The "routine spotters" are in addition to the team and do not take the place of "team spotters" required by rule. For example, if an extended stunt requires a spotter by rule, that skill must be spotted by a member of the team and not the additional "routine spotter." "Routine spotters" must not take part in the routine choreography and are there solely to be in a position to spot an errant skill.

Participant Action

Participants should be made aware that in the event of a serious injury, they can stop the routine and seek medical assistance. Continued participation while injured may put them or their teammates at further risk. Coaches and tournament officials should have the ability to determine when to stop a routine due to an injury that puts the individual or others at further risk.

Additional Statement:

The AACCA does not make any recommendation with respect to how to address the adjudication of a routine interrupted due to injury. Further, the AACCA does not make any recommendation as to how to address the level of involvement of the required spotters and any effect their spotting may have on the adjudication of a routine. These policies should be left to the event organizers. However, such policies should be clearly communicated to coaches prior to registration for the event.