



OKLAHOMA SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION

DAVID JACKSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TRINITY JOHNSON, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Assistants : Grant Gower - Mike Clark - Alex Claussen - Brian Lester - Wes Ruth - Lenny Hatchett



TO: Slow-Pitch Softball Coaches
FROM: Mike Clark, Assistant
RE: 2025-2026 Slow-Pitch Softball
DATE: February 5, 2026

Attached you will find:

1. Coaches Letter 25-26
2. Sample Emergency Action Plan – Required
3. Concussion Information—Located on the Website
4. Lightning Safety
5. Extreme Heat

Please read through all enclosed materials. The Slow-Pitch manual is available online at www.ossaa.com. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the OSSAA rules, regulations and policies. New regulations are underlined. You can find post season play-off dates in the manual, there is also a two-year planner on the homepage of OSSAA.com.

Requests for co-ops in Slow Pitch softball are due no later than January 15.

EDUCATION-BASED ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

The National Federation of State High School Associations and the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association recognize the numerous potential benefits of participation by students in education-based activities. While education-based activities may differ between the stakeholder groups, all should be centered on optimizing the student's scholastic activity experience. Students will change, develop and expand abilities over time; coaches, administrators and parents should not only be cognizant of the fluid process, but also foster a safe, positive environment in which development can occur. Education-based activities must always be viewed as an evolving and unpredictable path.

The NFHS and the OSSAA recognize the influential role played by coaches and directors in all activities, and therefore emphasis should be placed on those individuals to instill and reinforce fundamentals and best practices, not only to minimize risk but also to promote an environment in which a student has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. The common goal for all the stakeholders involved with education-based activities should be to make the experience enjoyable and rewarding for the all.

While our position is not intended to squelch dreams of achieving a college scholarship or professional or Olympic glory, we do place emphasis on the student's entire scholastic activity experience with the goals of enhancing participation, reducing injury risk, and optimizing performance and success (however defined) during the student's high school career. The ultimate goal; Producing an individual who is competent, confident, connected to his or her peer group and community, and of high character. This essential principle is at the core of the scholastic activity experience and is fundamental to the mission of the OSSAA and NFHS.

2026 STATE SLOW-PITCH SOFTBALL RULES MEETING: Will be held via Zoom on February 18 at 5:00 p.m.

If you are unable to attend the live meeting you can view the recording after February 23. The link for the meeting can be found on the Slow-Pitch page at www.ossaa.com.

State Rules meetings are mandatory for head coaches and must be completed by March 1. Failure to comply will result in the suspension of the head coach from all interscholastic competition until the coach is in compliance.

If you plan to host an invitational tournament this season, be sure to have the tournament sanctioned by the OSSAA. Sanction forms are available on the miscellaneous forms link at www.ossaa.com.

All district, regional and state assignments will be posted to the OSSAA website (www.ossaa.com) by 4:00 p.m. of the release date. There will be no playoff information or pairings sent to the school by regular mail.

Also, please be reminded that applications for academic achievement awards are due April 29, 2026. The application can be found on the OSSAA website, www.ossaa.com. Click on Sports, then Slow-Pitch Softball.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

BATS

Only alloy bats are permitted in Slow Pitch Softball. No portion of the bat may be made of composite material. The ASA or USA stamp must be stamped from the manufacturer.

SAFETY FIRST BASE

Safety first base is **required**.

SOFTBALLS:

The Wilson optic yellow 12 inch polycore leather softball will be used exclusively throughout the play-offs. The Wilson optic yellow 12 inch polycore leather softball will be the only softball used during the 2025 state tournament. The cor of all softballs shall not exceed .44 and a compression of 375 lbs. max. The cor shall be labeled on all balls. Balls that do not have a cor rating on their label are illegal.

HELMETS:

A batting helmet with a permanently affixed NOCSAE stamp and legible exterior warning label is mandatory for each batter, on-deck batter, players/students in the coach's boxes, runners and retired runners. Non-adult bat/ball shaggers shall wear batting helmets while in live-ball area, even if the ball is dead. The batting helmet shall have extended ear flaps which cover both ears and temples. Batting helmets that are broken, cracked, dented, or that have been altered are prohibited from use.

CATCHERS:

The catcher shall wear a catcher's helmet and mask combination that meets the NOCSAE standard. The helmet shall bear the permanent NOCSAE seal. A throat protector that is part of or attached to the mask shall extend far enough to adequately protect the throat. An attached throat protector shall be commercially manufactured, properly attached, unaltered and worn properly.

The catcher shall wear body protector and baseball/softball protective shin guards.

EQUIPMENT CHECK

In accordance with NFHS Rule 3-5-1: Prior to the start of the game at the pregame conference, **the head coach** shall be responsible for verifying to the plate umpire that the lineup card is correct, all his/her players are legally equipped, and that players and equipment are in compliance with all NFHS rules.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

Any time a member school is hosting a planned activity at a school facility there must be an Emergency Action Plan in place. The plan must be shared with any visiting school. An Emergency Action Plan, or EAP, is a formal written plan, developed by the host site, that identifies potential emergency conditions at the event site and prescribes the procedures to be followed to minimize or prevent loss of life and property.

OSSAA RANKING SCORE REPORTING POLICY

The OSSAA has an on-line ranking program for use by school administrators, coaches, and the general public. The program is accessible at the OSSAA website (www.ossaa.com).

For Slow-Pitch Softball, it is mandatory that results from each regular season contest be entered into the ranking program within 24 hours of the conclusion of the contest throughout the season.

Any coach failing to report the score within 24 hours of the conclusion of a contest will initially be notified in writing of his or her failure to comply by OSSAA Staff. A copy of that correspondence will be sent to the coach's school administrator as well. A second incident of failure to report will result in the coach being placed on warning for a period of one year. A third, and each subsequent failure to report will result in the suspension of the coach for the next contest.

Generally, if the contest, meet, or tournament limits for a particular activity have been exceeded by either a school team or by individual participants from a school, the following sanctions will be applied:

1. The head coach in that activity shall be suspended from coaching in any regular season contests, at the same level, in the same activity, for the remainder of the current regular season and any championship play-off events for that school year.
2. The head coach in that activity shall be suspended from coaching any regular season contests, at the same level, in the same activity, for one-half of the regular season the next school year.
3. The school will not be allowed to host any play-off contests in that activity during the school year in which the violation occurred.
4. The program will be placed on warning for a period of one year.

During the season, if you have a problem with an umpire(s), please email mclark@ossaa.com to notify the Activities Association. The most recent list of eligible (enrolled for the current school year and passed Part I of the National Federation Softball Examination) 2025-2026 school year slow-pitch softball umpires is available at www.ossaa.com. Your high school principal has been sent the login information. Using a game umpire who is not eligible for the 2025-2026 school year puts a school in a possible liability situation and jeopardizes the catastrophic insurance provided member participants in grades 9-12. Please do not take any chances.

SLOW PITCH WEEKLY RANKINGS AND RANKING COMMITTEE

Coaches will be required to rank each week according to the ranking schedule posted on each school's respective ranking page at OSSAARankings.com. Coaches will rank 16 teams each week, the high and the low ranking will be dropped. Rankings will open at NOON on Friday of each week and close on Monday at NOON. The ranking schedule will be posted to your Slow Pitch ranking page prior to March 1.

A committee selected by the Slow Pitch Coaches Association will monitor the rankings each week. Should a particular team be dropped more than 5 positions in a ranking from one week to the next, the committee will contact that coach for justification for the ranking he or she submitted. Should the justification not meet the established criteria for dropping a team more than 5 positions, the offending school's rankings will be voided and the team penalized 16 points in the current week's rankings.

CLASSIFICATION: Review Section III of the 2025-2026 Slow-Pitch Softball Manual.

OFF SEASON TRY-OUTS (OSSAA BOARD POLICY)

Only students in grades 8-11 attending school in the district for which the try-out is held may be permitted to participate in a try-out. Try-outs should only be conducted for the purpose of the selection of a school team and may not be used for practice time. Each day of the try-out may be up to 2 hours in length. No off-season try-out will be allowed for more than three days, and all sessions of the try-out must conclude by 9 p.m. A record of all try-outs should be kept on file at the member school detailing the dates, times and grade level of all participants in the tryout. The OSSAA reserves the right to request these records from a member school. Exception: Cheerleading may conduct a clinic of no more than 4 days, each day of the try-out clinic may be up to two hours in length. All students participating in the tryout must be attending school in the district for which the try-out is being held.

SUMMERTIME DEAD PERIOD

The dead period will occur during the week in July that includes the 4th of July each year. The dead period will be nine (9) days in length and begin the weekend preceding the 4th of July and the weekend following the 4th of July.

Secondary-level students enrolled or pre-enrolled at a member school may not use any member school's athletic facilities during the dead period in connection with any athletic activity governed by the OSSAA. Member school coaches, assistant coaches and sponsors may not have any contact with secondary-level enrolled or pre-enrolled students in that member school in any athletic activity governed by the OSSAA for the purpose of coaching, training, or instructing.

Summertime policies, including beginning and end of season restrictions, can be found in OSSAA Board Policy XI in the Administrator's Handbook.

Violations of the summertime dead period policy will result in the coach or sponsor being suspended from the first half of the regular season in that athletic activity. School personnel not designated as a coach or sponsor in violation of the summertime dead period policy will result in the head coach being suspended from the first half of the regular season in that activity.

Best wishes for a successful 2026 girls' slow-pitch softball season.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

SPORT: _____

YEAR: _____

1. FIRST TO ARRIVE ON THE SCENE PROVIDES FIRST AID.
2. SEND A COACH, MANAGER, OR UNINJURED ATHLETE TO NOTIFY THE ATHLETIC TRAINER (ATC) AND GET THE AED (IF NOT ON-SITE).
3. IF THE ATC CAN NOT BE LOCATED, THE HEAD COACH WILL BECOME THE LEADER.

LEADER: _____

- Will be in charge of the emergency situation and will instruct all others on the emergency team

LEADER'S ASSISTANT: _____

- Will assist the leader in the evaluation of the injured athlete

PHONE CALLER: _____

- Will go to the nearest phone and activate the EMS
- Will inform the dispatcher of:
 - The nature of the injury and age of the athlete
 - The location of the athlete and directions to the site
 - Will not hang up until the dispatcher advises him/her to do so

NEAREST PHONE: _____

AMBULANCE ENTRANCE: _____

PERSON TO MEET THE EMS: _____

- Will contact any necessary staff to assure access for the ambulance
- Will meet the ambulance at the designated entrance and lead them to the injured athlete

PERSON TO ACCOMPANY ATHLETE TO HOSPITAL: _____

- Will ride with the athlete in the ambulance in the event the parents cannot be located
- Will take the athlete's emergency info to the hospital

- * It is the certified athletic trainer or coach's responsibility to inform the administrator of the incident
- * It is the certified athletic trainer or coach's responsibility to inform the athlete's parents of the injury immediately.
- * It is the certified athletic trainer's responsibility to document the circumstances surrounding the activity and all actions taken.
- * Emergency medical info for each athlete is to accompany the team at all times.

EMS (Fire, Police, Ambulance): 911
Athletic Department:

Any High School:
Athletic Training Room:

ATC:

Site contact:

Nearest Hospital:

EXTREME HEAT POLICY

XLVIII. EXTREME HEAT

The OSSAA recognizes that heat related illness is the leading cause of preventable death in high school students participating in activities. The Board adopted the following policies:

Acclimatization Period: Whenever students are participating in an environment in which the temperature cannot be controlled there should be acclimatization period. The acclimatization period is defined as the first 14 days of participation beginning with the first date of practice in that sport or activity, or the first date a participant begins practice, whichever is later. Any speed, strength, or conditioning programs shall not be considered a part of the acclimatization period. All students participating in athletics or activities, including those who arrive to preseason practice after the first day of practice, are required to follow the guidelines of the first days of the acclimatization period.

All athletic coaches and marching band directors are required to view *A Guide to Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Prevention* at www.nfhslearn.com, annually. A certificate of completion shall be kept on file for each coach or marching band director at the member school.

FOOTBALL (Mandates)

- a. Preseason practice shall be limited to 2 ½ hours per session with a minimum of one hour between practice sessions. No more than 5 hours of practice per 24-hour period will be allowed. There will be no physical activity during the one-hour rest period. Any time a coach is present during football practice, the time will count toward the maximum 5 hours, with the exception of strength training.
- b. If a practice session is interrupted by inclement weather or heat restrictions, and it is required the session be divided for the good of the student-athlete's welfare as long as the total practice time does not exceed 2 ½ hours.
- c. When multiple practices are conducted in the same day, it is required that either practice not exceed 2½ hours in length and students not participate in more than five total hours of practice activities, including walk-through sessions. Warm-up, stretching, cool down and conditioning activities are included as part of the practice time. Practices should be separated by at least one hour, where there is no physical activity between the end of the first practice and the beginning of the second practice.
- d. Immediately prior to any practice, coaches are required to use a smart-phone APP, or other mechanism or program to get heat index, such as CoachSmart or the OSHA APP. There are also programs available on the Internet, such as AccuWeather, or Weather.com. These programs are free and can be used on any smart-phone, tablet, or computer. A chart outlining recommendations for making concessions for extreme heat is available on the OSSAA website. Schools must develop their own form to record the heat index each practice session.
- e. All practices must be held under the supervision of a coach employed by the school.
- f. Practices must always be conducted with an open water policy.
- g. Cooling stations shall be made available for the athletes (buckets of cool water, wet towels, sponges, etc.)
- h. Each program shall have a heat related emergency plan on hand at all times.

Guidelines for outdoor activities:

- a. Athletic Coaches or marching band directors should use a smart-phone APP, or other mechanism or program to get heat index, such as CoachSmart or the OSHA APP. There are also programs available on the Internet, such as AccuWeather, or Weather.com. These programs are free and can be used on any smart-phone, tablet, or computer. A chart outlining recommendations for making concessions for extreme heat is available on the OSSAA website. Schools must develop their own form to record the heat index each practice session.
- b. All practices should be held under the supervision of a coach, director, or sponsor employed by the school.
- c. Practices should always be conducted with an open water policy.
- d. Each program should have a heat related emergency plan on hand at all times.
- e. Preseason practice should be avoided if possible between the hours of 12 p.m. and 6 p.m.
- f. Parents and students should be educated on the importance of hydration during extreme heat conditions.
- g. Cooling stations should be made available when possible (buckets of cool water, wet towels, sponges, etc.)
- h. Equipment should be removed for conditioning.

SPORTS MEDICINE

Handbook



**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS**

PO Box 690
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206
Phone: 317-972-6900, Fax: 317.822.5700
www.nfhs.org

Fourth Edition

May 2011

Updates and final documents prepared for the NFHS by: NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee

NFHS Staff Liaison: Bob Colgate, Assistant Director

NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee Chair/Editor: Michael C. Koester, M.D., ATC

NFHS is a registered trademark of the National Federation of State High School Associations and use in any manner is prohibited without prior approval of the NFHS.

Member state associations and schools in those associations may reproduce information in this publication for their own use, provided the NFHS copyright is included in the material. The Preparticipation Physical Evaluation Chapter may not be reproduced.

Copyright 2011, by National Federation of State High School Associations.
Printed in the United States of America.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Lightning Safety

By Kevin D. Walter, M.D., FAAP

- Education and prevention are the keys to lightning safety.
- Practice and competitions should be immediately suspended as soon as lightning is seen or thunder is heard.
- All athletes and spectators should seek safe shelter during severe weather.
- Play should not resume for at least 30 minutes after the last lightning strike or thunderclap.

SIGNIFICANCE

Lightning is one of the most consistent causes of weather-related deaths and injury in the U.S. According to the National Severe Storms Laboratory, there are approximately 100 lightning-related deaths and over 1000 injuries yearly.

BACKGROUND

Lightning-related injuries mainly occur between May and September. Most lightning-related casualties happen between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m., with the majority of those occurring between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Therefore, the risk of lightning-related injury appears to be highest during some of the most active periods for outdoor athletic activities. The average distance between successive lightning flashes is about two to three miles, which means that **risk is present whenever lightning can be seen or thunder can be heard.**

Game administrators, officials and the sports medicine staff can be aware of adverse weather by following local forecasts and by monitoring the National Weather Service (NWS). The NWS issues storm watches and warnings during times of severe weather. A watch means that the conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop, while a warning indicates severe weather has been reported and appropriate precautions should be taken. It must be remembered that any thunderstorm poses a risk of injury, even if not deemed "severe" by the NWS.

MANAGEMENT

As soon as lightning is seen or thunder is heard, practice and competition should be suspended immediately. A **Lightning Safety Plan** should be a component of the Emergency Action Plan (see Emergency Action Plan chapter) and should be in place for every sport and facility. This plan should contain instructions for participants and spectators, designation of safe shelters, and designation of warning and all clear signals. This plan must be disseminated to the proper personnel and reviewed and practiced on a routine basis.

There should also be a systematic plan for monitoring weather. The weather forecast should be closely followed throughout the day prior to any practice or competition. A weather radio is helpful in providing current information. Weather can also be monitored over the Internet or through the use of lightning strike monitors. However, such

technology should never be a substitute for directly hearing or seeing dangerous weather. There should also be one person designated to monitor threatening weather and make decisions regarding participation. However, if anyone hears thunder or sees a lightning strike, appropriate action should begin.



If lightning is imminent or a thunderstorm is approaching, all personnel, athletes and spectators should be evacuated to safe structures. A list of the closest safe structures should be announced and displayed on placards at all venues. The ideal safe structure is a fully enclosed building with plumbing, telephone and electrical service, which aid in grounding the structure. A fully enclosed automobile or school bus with all of the windows rolled up is a reasonable shelter, although care must be taken to avoid contact with any metal inside the vehicle. The hard metal frame and roof, not the rubber tires, dissipate the current around the vehicle. Golf carts and convertible cars are not safe shelters. Dugouts and golf shelters are not safe shelters and are not grounded for the effects of lightning.

Avoid the use of shower facilities for shelter and do not use showers or plumbing during a thunderstorm as the electrical current from lightning can enter the building through plumbing connections. It is also unsafe to stand near utilities or use a landline telephone during a thunderstorm because of the risk of the current traveling through the lines. Cellular and cordless telephones are considered to be safe.

If a suitable safe shelter is not available, it is best to avoid tall objects (trees, light poles, etc) that allow lightning an easy path to the ground. It is important to avoid being the tallest object. In an open field, people should crouch with their legs together, the weight on the balls of their feet, arms wrapped around their knees, and head down with their ears covered. The person should minimize contact with the ground and should NOT lie flat.

People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electric charge. Therefore, it is safe to perform CPR, if needed. Ideally, injured persons are moved into a safe shelter. Lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need emergency help.

RETURN TO PLAYING FIELD

The NFHS recommends following the 30-minute rule when making return-to-play decisions. After the last flash of lightning is witnessed or the last thunderclap is heard, it is recommended to wait at least 30 minutes before resuming practice or competition. Given the average rate of thunderstorm travel, the storm should move 10 to 12 miles away from the area, reducing the risk of local lightning strike. **Any subsequent lightning strike or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count should reset the clock and another count should begin.**

PREVENTION

In order to prevent lightning-related injuries, it is important to formulate and implement a Lightning Safety Plan and provide adequate education for all athletes and personnel. The plan needs to be reviewed and practiced periodically. The plan also must include a systematic approach for monitoring local weather activity and recognizing signs of nearby danger (thunder and lightning strikes). Criteria for suspension and resumption of activity should be clear. Appropriate safe shelters for each athletic venue should be clearly identified.

References

Bennett BL. A model lightning safety policy for athletics. *Journal of Athletic Training* 1997;32:251-253.

Cooper MA, et al. Lightning injuries. In: Auerbach PS, ed. *Management of Wilderness and Environmental Emergencies*. 5th ed. C.V. Mosby, 2007:68-108.

Holle R, Lopez R. Lightning-impacts and safety. *WMO Bulletin* 1998;47:148-155.

National Collegiate Athletic Association. Guideline 1d: Lightning safety. 2010-11 Sports Medicine Handbook (21st edition).

Resources

www.lightningsafety.com

www.weather.com

www.weather.gov

SPORTSMANSHIP

The OSSAA's vision for sportsmanship is built on expectations. Expectations that the school community—administrators, teachers, coaches, students, and patrons strive for displaying only positive behavior and good sportsmanship in everything they do at all interscholastic contests.

As educators we have the unique opportunity to teach the value of discipline, dignity, integrity, fairness and respect to young people each day.

We encourage all school personnel to take advantage of the opportunity and make a lasting difference.

