



San Joaquin County

Emergency Medical Services Agency



<http://www.sjgov.org/ems>

Policy Memorandum No. 2015-03

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TO: Prehospital Personnel and Providers
Emergency Departments

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SUBJ. Spinal Motion Restriction (Stabilization) for the Injured Athlete

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance for the application of spinal stabilization techniques for the injured athlete participating in an equipment-laden sport, such as football, hockey or lacrosse. If spinal motion restriction (stabilization) is indicated following assessment of the injured athlete it is recommended that protective sports equipment (e.g. helmet and shoulder pads) be removed prior to transport.

Assessment and stabilization using an X-Collar™ should be performed in accordance with the requirements of EMS Policy No. 5115, Cervical Spine Stabilization.

The recommendation to remove protective equipment prior to transport is supported by the 2015 position statement issued by the National Athletic Trainers' Association which states:

“It is essential and now recommended that, when appropriate, in an emergency situation with equipment-intensive sports (e.g., helmets and shoulder pads in football, hockey and lacrosse), the protective equipment be removed prior to transport to the hospital...in most cases, athletic trainers have been exposed to more equipment removal training than many other members of the medical team. As a result, individuals on the field may have a greater knowledge of equipment removal procedures than the hospital emergency department staff.”¹

Prehospital personnel especially those personnel that will be covering or responding to sporting events should participate in hands-on training to learn and practice the skills needed to assess injured athletes, efficiently remove protective sports equipment while applying spinal stabilization techniques, and safely transport injured athletes using scoop stretchers and other devices.

The EMS Agency encourages ambulance services and other prehospital providers to work cooperatively with their local athletic trainers to conduct joint training and develop school/site specific emergency action plans.

¹ *Appropriate Care of the Spine Injured Athlete*, National Athletic Trainers' Association, 2015.