

Welcome to a special edition of the NOCSAE Newsletter...

During this time of the year when high school football seasons are nearing the end, coaches, athletic directors, and administrative staff begin calling with questions specifically addressing helmet purchases, reconditioning, and helmet recertification to the NOCSAE standards.

Because of some differences between helmet brands and styles, NOCSAE also receives specific questions that are best answered by the manufacturers, including matters of warranty, and brand comparisons.

It is hoped that this joint mailing and information packet will address all of those questions, and facilitate

the decision process that each of your schools and districts face at this time of the year.

As always, you are encouraged to contact NOCSAE or the manufacturer or reconditioner for additional information, follow-up questions, or any questions that we have not covered here.

Sincerely,

Michael Oliver

Executive Director and General Counsel
NOCSAE

RECONDITIONING AND RECERTIFICATION

How often am I required to recondition my football helmets?

The NOCSAE standards do not specify or require recertification or reconditioning of helmets on any particular schedule or frequency. And except for California, there is no state law or regulation that requires helmet reconditioning or recertification with any specific frequency. NOCSAE recommends that helmets be regularly inspected, and that each school implement a program of regular reconditioning and recertification. The most common schedule which seems to be followed is to send approximately ½ of the helmets for reconditioning and recertification each year, with a recognition that inspection may identify a helmet that is in need of reconditioning even though it may not be due for another year.

Some manufacturers require reconditioning at least every two years as part of their warranty requirements, so the two year program would accommodate that issue as well.

Can a helmet be recertified without being reconditioned?

The short answer is no. The NOCSAE recertification standard requires that helmets be tested both before and after reconditioning, so it would not be possible to recertify a helmet without submitting that helmet to the reconditioning process.

Recertification is performed as part of the reconditioning process, and uses the same test equipment, headforms, and data collection and measurement system as is used for new helmet certification, including the requirement that recertification testing be done in an environmentally controlled room separate from the rest of the reconditioning process.

Who can recertify my helmets to the NOCSAE standard?

Only companies that have been licensed by NOCSAE are permitted to recertify helmets to the

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RECONDITIONING AND RECERTIFICATION *continued*

NOCSAE standard. A NOCSAE licensee is authorized to recertify any brand and model of helmet, and is required by our standards and by the license agreement to strictly follow specific procedures and protocol, which includes the use of proprietary data acquisition and analysis software.

How can I tell if a reconditioner is licensed by NOCSAE to recertify helmets?

Each company licensed by NOCSAE to recertify helmets will be able to produce a letter signed by the NOCSAE Executive Director verifying the reconditioner is licensed and in good standing with NOCSAE. If necessary, you may call or contact NOCSAE directly and we will be able to confirm or verify the license of any reconditioner.

Although the NOCSAE license authorizes a reconditioner to recertify any brand and model of helmet, the license does not affect the authority or right of a manufacturer to restrict reconditioning of its helmets to specific companies or reconditioners.

The enclosed letters from football helmet manufacturers explain better the individual policies of each company with regard to reconditioning their specific helmets. ■

Comparing Helmet Brands And Models

Can NOCSAE tell me which helmet provides the best protection for our athletes?

The short answer is no.

The NOCSAE standard is premised on a pass/fail threshold that uses an impact energy evaluation algorithm which generates a number called the

Severity Index or SI, from each test impact. In order to be certified or recertified, a helmet must generate an SI score less than 1200 at all impacts. This simply means that a helmet either passes or it doesn't.

The SI number was not designed to be a qualitative data point. There is no reliable data from which it can be concluded, for example, that a helmet with an average SI of 300 is measurably better at preventing any particular injury than a helmet with an average SI of 400 or 500. The number simply is not designed to make that qualitative measurement.

NOCSAE licensees, whether manufacturer or reconditioner, are prohibited from using the SI scores as support for any claims that their helmets are better in any aspect than other helmets with different scores.

Which helmets provide the best protection from concussion?

NOCSAE cannot answer that question and probably should not. The mechanisms of a concussive injury are better understood than even 5 years ago, and much is being learned everyday, but there is more that remains to be understood. Through its Grants and Research programs, NOCSAE supports and underwrites much of the concussion research, but the conclusion as to which helmet does a better job in reducing or preventing concussions is better addressed by the manufacturers. NOCSAE believes that every helmet which has been certified to our standard does a remarkable job in reducing head injuries and their severity, including concussions, but there are many variables that may contribute to the occurrence of a concussion which are unrelated to helmet design and performance.

All of the helmet manufacturers have incorporated changes in design and materials to address the issue of concussion prevention and related injuries. These 'new' designs have all been tested and certified as meeting the NOCSAE standard, and the various manufacturers strongly believe in their helmets and unique benefits. ■

