

Get the Facts About Batting Helmets and Cheek Flap Products

Today, many athletic equipment manufacturers sell cheek flap products for baseball and softball batting helmets that cover a portion of the cheek and jaw. These products are available both as add-on accessories and as built-in features of newer helmets.

NOCSAE urges parents, players and coaches to understand the facts:

Do cheek flap products meet the NOCSAE standard for face protection?

No. Cheek flap products cannot meet the NOCSAE standard for face protection because they do not protect the eyes, nose and mouth.

Do new helmet models that include a built-in cheek flap meet the NOCSAE standard for face protection?

No. While newer helmet models that include only a built-in cheek flap do meet the NOCSAE standard for **head** protection, they **do not** meet the NOCSAE standard for **face** protection.

It's important to note the difference between head protection – the helmet; and face protection – the face guard. When purchasing a helmet with a built-in cheek flap, consumers should understand that the “Meets NOCSAE Standard” logo applies to the NOCSAE standard for **head** protection. The cheek flap is not included in that standard and does not meet the NOCSAE standard for **face** protection.

Are products available that meet the NOCSAE standard for face protection?

Yes. Face guard products that meet the NOCSAE standard for face protection are widely available. Currently, 11 different brands sell face guards certified to the NOCSAE standards, not including face guards that are sold as part of a combination helmet/face guard package.

The “Meets NOCSAE Standard” logo indicates a face guard meets rigorous safety and quality control criteria and provides protection for the entire face, including the eyes, nose and mouth.

Why do some youth leagues not allow cheek flaps?

While the policies of youth sports leagues vary with each organization, add-on helmet accessories are often not allowed because they change the original helmet model. The addition of an add-on product from a third-party manufacturer can void the NOCSAE certification, because it creates a new and untested model, as defined by NOCSAE standards. This policy has been a part of NOCSAE standards for many years, applies to all NOCSAE standards, and is typical of certification procedures for other types of personal protection equipment. See, e.g., NIOSH standards for respirators and the use of after-market modifications.

If you have additional questions about cheek flap products and NOCSAE standards, please email mike.oliver@nocsae.org