



This section on Safety and Risk Management complements the information provided in section 6 of the Introduction to Community Coaching Reference Material, and is directed primarily at supporting you, as a developing coach, in your role working with children in the Learning to Train stage of development.

This section is also intended to provide you with materials that will assist you if you choose to work with athletes in the Training to Train stage and beyond.

8.1 Sport Safety

By its very nature, physical activity can present some risk of injury and one of your key responsibilities as a coach is to manage the potential risks that present themselves during practice, competition or special activity.

Material in this section highlights some of the specific areas of risk that are a concern at this stage in an athlete's development.

8.1.1 Roller Skiing

Roller skiing is an integral part of the sport of cross-country skiing, providing one of the most enjoyable and highly specific forms of ski training that can be practised in the dryland training season. Roller skiing is also a sporting activity that is characterized by important legal and safety issues:

- ❑ The effective practice of roller skiing requires extended stretches of relatively smooth pavement. There are few venues where such conditions have been created exclusively or primarily for the use of roller skiers. Therefore, most roller skiing takes place on public roads and highways. In some municipalities or provinces, this practice is limited or prohibited by legislation.
- ❑ Several factors contribute to the existence of a considerable risk of injury during roller skiing. These include the relative instability of roller ski wheels, the lack of brakes, a hard road surface, the exposure to motor vehicles travelling at relatively high speeds and the inexperience of either roller skiing participants or motor vehicle drivers in sharing the road.

Cross Country Canada exercises leadership in this area in the form of a policy document that serves to:

- ❑ help manage the risk to its membership;
- ❑ reduce the exposure of CCC, its member Divisions and registered clubs to legal liability for related accidents, as identified in CCC's insurance contract; and
- ❑ contribute to the adherence by roller skiers to prudent and responsible practices that will gain the respect of the Canadian public, thereby protecting the right to roller ski on public roads wherever such practices are permitted.





CCC Roller Skiing Policy

- ❑ **Aim.** The aim of this policy is to state the CCC approach to managing these issues and to establish guidelines for procedures to be followed by CCC members engaged in roller skiing.
- ❑ **Authority.** This policy is developed by the National Ski Team Committee (NSTC) and promulgated under the authority of the Board.
- ❑ **Definition.** For the purposes of this policy, roller skiing includes all dryland training conducted on roller skis, roller blades (in-line skates) and scooters.
- ❑ **General Guidelines.** The following guidelines describe the procedures to be adopted by CCC members at all times when roller skiing:
 - ✓ Think safety first.
 - ✓ It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that he/she possesses the skills to roller ski safely in the selected terrain. It is also the responsibility of the individual to ski in a safe, non-hazardous manner.
 - ✓ Choose terrain that matches ability. Avoid areas with steep downhill, stop signs at the bottom of hills, railroad crossings, potholes or other hazards.
 - ✓ Wear protective clothing. A hard-shell, regulation helmet (ANSI, CSA or Snell) is mandatory. Inexperienced roller skiers should also wear leather-palmed gloves, wrist guards, knee pads and elbow pads.
 - ✓ Ski under control. If in doubt, walk down steep hills or intentionally fall before reaching an unsafe speed.
 - ✓ Do not wear “iPods” or other electronic devices that will decrease your ability to hear and react to any situation that may occur.
- ❑ **Roller Skiing on Public Roads.** The following guidelines describe the procedures to be adopted by CCC members when roller skiing on roads that are also being used by automobile traffic:
 - ✓ If roller skiing must be conducted on public roads, select roads with minimal traffic. Roads with wide shoulders are preferable.
 - ✓ Refrain from roller skiing where the practice is prohibited by law. In such situations, work through your Club or Division to negotiate road closures for periods set aside for roller ski training.
 - ✓ Roller ski when traffic is light and visibility is good. Do not ski when visibility is poor.
 - ✓ Obey the rules of the road. Skiers must adhere to traffic signals and posted signs.
 - ✓ Where possible, conduct technique sessions in areas with controlled vehicle access.
 - ✓ For time trials, competitions or similar events, on public roads where traffic is permitted during the event, put out large signs that say: “Caution – Roller Skiers Training. Drive Carefully” or similar warnings. If a large event is scheduled, it is desirable also to post marshals to warn motorists of the activity.





- ✓ Wear clothing that is light or bright in colour, in order to be more visible to motorists. The use of fluorescent clothing or vests is endorsed as an extra step that should be considered.
 - ✓ Roller ski only in a single file and on the right side of the road travelling with the traffic, like a bicycle, or as required by local regulations.
 - ✓ Scan the road for traffic and maintain situational awareness at all times, creating time to react to traffic as it approaches.
 - ✓ When being passed by a car, yield as much room as possible. If practising skating technique, switch to classic as a vehicle passes so as to take less room on the road.
 - ✓ Be polite to drivers. A good relationship and good reputation with those with whom roller skiers must share the road is an important element in ensuring safety and protecting the privilege to use roads and highways for this purpose.
- ❑ **Insurance Implications.** The adoption by CCC of this policy has important insurance implications. Lack of compliance with the guidelines contained in this policy on the part of CCC members engaged in roller skiing may result in a breach of the CCC insurance policy and liability coverage may be denied.

8.1.2 Bicycling

Bicycling is a popular form of physical activity and transport. Between 86% and 90% of Canadian children aged 10 to 14 are cyclists. Once your cross-country ski program begins to include dryland activities (practice sessions, camps, etc.), it is inevitable that you will have to consider this form of off-season exercise and how you want to deal with it. Knowing how to incorporate cycling into your program SAFELY is therefore essential information for every cross-country ski coach.

Incidents causing injury are understandable, predictable and up to 90% preventable. The most frequent causes of bicycle incidents causing injury are:

- ❑ Loss of control – due to hitting a rut, bump or loose gravel, riding double, stunt riding, a foot slipping from the pedal.
- ❑ Mechanical problems – brake failure, changing gears, chain slippage, loose pedals.
- ❑ Entanglement – feet, loose clothing, packages, etc. get caught in wheels or chains.
- ❑ Cyclist ignorance – of safety practices and traffic laws.

It is important for you and the other administrators/coaches working with your program to have a plan as to when and how you want to include bicycling activities. Together you should determine what the safety rules will be, which roads are acceptable to use, which roads are out-of-bounds, etc.





Insurance Implications

It is also important to learn the limitations of your club's CCC liability insurance policy. Does it include "road cycling" for training purposes and for recreational purposes? Does the insurance coverage extend to off-the-road "mountain biking" training activities and off-the-road "mountain biking" recreational activities? Does it matter which type of bike you use in these different scenarios? Each year, before undertaking cycling activities, you should check with your club officials to determine what restrictions apply. Lack of compliance with standard safety precautions and the insurance policy guidelines may result in a breach of the CCC insurance policy and liability coverage may be denied.

YOUR BIKE INJURY FACT SHEET

- Over 100 Canadians die each year from bike injuries. Children aged five to 14 account for about half of these deaths.
- Every year, over 50,000 children are seriously injured in bike related mishaps.
- Survivors with brain injury may suffer seizures, intellectual and memory impairment and personality changes.
- The human skull can be shattered by an impact of 7-10 km/hr, and children's skulls are more vulnerable than adults.
- A fall from 60 cm (two feet) can cause permanent brain damage; a fall at a speed of 20 km/hr can result in death.
- Head injuries account for 75% of all deaths from bike injuries.
- 85% of bike injuries **do not** involve a motor vehicle.
- 85% of incidents between cyclists and cars are due to rider error.
- Only 2-11% of bicycle riders always wear a helmet.
- Wearing a bicycle helmet reduces the risk of head injury by 85% and of brain injury by 88%.**

8.1.3 Heat and Humidity

As your athletes get older and their fitness requirements increase, your ski program will extend further into the summer months. Knowing how to exercise safely during that period should therefore become an important part of the knowledge base of coaches working with cross-country ski programs for athletes in the Learning to Train stage and older.





The information contained in this section will help you implement training and competition practices that will reduce the risk of injuries related to heat and humidity.

The Challenge of Exercising in the Heat

- During exercise, the muscles produce heat. This heat must be dissipated or the body runs the risk of overheating. Overheating can result in serious, potentially life-threatening injuries.
- Sweating is one of the heat-dissipating mechanisms of the body. When sweat evaporates, it cools off the body.
- Most sport activities lead to heat production and sweating. Evaporation of sweat works best when the air is dry. In moist, damp air, sweat cannot evaporate easily, and cooling off is harder.
- If the air temperature is high during vigorous activity, athletes can lose a significant amount of water through sweating.
- High temperatures and high relative humidity make it hard for the body to dissipate heat; heavy sweating occurs, but the water loss does not help cool off the body. Under these conditions, athletes run the risk of overheating.
- Water loss as a result of heavy sweating can lead to dehydration. Dehydration can reduce performance, decrease the body's ability to dissipate heat and endanger health.
- During exercise in the heat, adequate hydration is a must. Athletes must drink water whenever the risk of dehydration is present.
- Thirst is not a good indicator of a need for water. In fact, dehydration has already started if an athlete feels thirsty.
- In most exercise conditions, the rate at which athletes lose water exceeds the rate at which they can absorb it by drinking. Exercise in a hot environment accentuates this.
- Athletes therefore need to drink fluids before they are thirsty.
- Because their sweating mechanism is not fully developed, children run a higher risk of overheating when exercising in the heat. In addition, children tend to not drink enough during exercise, especially if the drink is not flavoured.

Steps to Take to Avoid Heat Injuries

- Give athletes enough time to get used to the environment they will face in competition.
- Insisting on heat acclimatization may mean not entering competitions or adjusting duration and intensity of training if athletes cannot train in a similar climate for approximately two weeks beforehand.

