

New Standard Improves Martial Arts Headgear

The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) has recently developed a performance standard for headgear. ASTM F2397-04, "Standard Specification for Protective Headgear Used in Martial Arts," covers performance requirements for head protection used for **training and competition**.

Depending on the nature of the art you teach, contact to the head may or may not be permitted. Styles such as karate, wushu, and tae kwon do typically involve contact between participants that may result in various levels and types of head-related injuries. These injuries may be as minor as a bruise or as severe as death. Ultimately, it is your obligation to protect your students from receiving head-related injuries. If you fail to do so, you may have to pay the student's medical bills, as well as damages if you are sued.

Markel Insurance Company requires martial arts programs to use headgear for arts that involve headshots. In fact, our Martial Arts Policy Endorsement specifically excludes insurance coverage if a head injury occurs and the participant was not wearing protective headgear.

Now that the ASTM standard has been established, you can check for compliance the next time you purchase headgear. Any headgear that meets ASTM standard F2397-04 will meet Markel's definition of approved headgear. While headgear is designed to decrease the chance of having a head injury or decrease its severity, no headgear can prevent all head injuries. Nevertheless, not wearing appropriate headgear highly increases the likelihood of a major head injury or trauma. Make it a requirement for all ages and skill levels.

For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at **610-832-9585**.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.