

Adequate Safe Zones Prevent Injuries

Every year, Markel receives a number of claims for injuries to participants and spectators on the periphery of a sports activity. Here are a few examples:

- Spectator walks into a player's swinging bat in the on-deck area of a baseball game.
- Youth playing dodge-ball in a gymnasium runs into a concrete wall and shatters four teeth because the wall was not padded and the playing zone was too close to the wall.
- Spectators hit by foul balls in baseball or run over by soccer players.
- Inline skaters colliding with unpadded basketball goal posts on an outdoor court.
- Children sledding on inner tubes sliding off course and into trees or into a lake.

Most sports have minimum safe zones designed to protect spectators and bystanders. For instance, the International Association of Officials Basketball requires a minimum of three feet from the sidelines to a wall, and pads on the wall beneath the goals. However, is a three-foot zone in front of an unpadded concrete wall appropriate for a dodge-ball game? That is not a question anyone would want to ask a jury when a young child has been seriously hurt.

When you use activity areas for other than their intended purpose, you need to re-evaluate safe zones for the participants and bystanders and make allowances. It's better to have too large a safe zone than too small.

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.