Baseball season is quickly approaching and it’s never too early to get a head start on background checks for your volunteers.

As of 8 a.m. Eastern U.S. Time on Feb. 14, 2012, background checks conducted through LexisNexis once again meet Little League International’s background check regulation (Regulation I [c] [8] and [9]), and is the preferred background check of your volunteers. Little League International pays for each local Little League organization’s first 125 background checks run through the LexisNexis national criminal database, that includes all 50 states’ sex offender registries. If additional checks are needed, leagues can purchase them for a low $1 each additional name checked.

Through LexisNexis, your league can instantly search over 270 million criminal records from all 50 states, including the sex offender registries check required to meet Little League’s Child Protection Program. This can be done at little or no cost for most leagues, with an easy-to-use website. Little League strongly encourages all leagues to use the criminal records search available at http://littleleague.lexisnexis.com.

The 125 free checks do not carry over annually, and LexisNexis resets your 125 free criminal background checks on November 1 of each year. So use all the checks you need to properly check all applicable volunteers in your league.

For the welfare and safety of your entire league, give LexisNexis a chance to help provide the safest environment for your athletes, spectators, and volunteers.

State Specific Information for Reporting Child Abuse

Little League Baseball and Softball has always been at the forefront in protecting children from abuse, exploitation, and harm.

As a part of this initiative, Little League introduced its Child Protection Program in the mid-1990’s, which was developed in partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. These materials are available in the Little League Operating Manual and on the Little League website. Chartered leagues are encouraged to review this information annually.

All states have child abuse reporting statutes. In continuing with its tradition of providing information and materials to constituent leagues to aid in protecting children, Little League’s Child Protection Program has compiled a resource guide which references the child abuse reporting requirements of each of the 50 states and the Federal government.

This resource guide includes summaries of the relevant statutes and provides links to the applicable statutory language. Where available, Little League has also attempted to include hotline information or other contact information and useful resources.

Little League International strongly encourages all leagues and individuals to immediately report any alleged or reasonably suspected abuse of a child of any nature to the proper law enforcement authorities. To review this information, please go to: http://www.littleleague.org/learn/programs/childprotection/ReportingChildAbuse.htm.

It is essential that each league review this material in order to understand their responsibilities on when and how to report supposed or alleged child abuse.
In preparation for this season, safety officers are busy creating or modifying their safety plans and completing facility surveys.

It’s beneficial to get your plans submitted by the early deadline and equally important to have a thorough and well-thought-out plan. For leagues that already have a plan in place from the previous year, this is the time to evaluate what worked and what didn’t, then make the necessary adjustments. These evaluations and modifications will be helpful to your league’s overall safety for the upcoming season.

Submit the facility survey and registration form with your completed safety plan – including all 13 minimum requirements – with a postmark no later than April 13, 2012. For District Administrators to earn the district incentive for ASAP participation, a district’s league plans must be received and approved by Little League International by March 13, 2012.

Here are a few tips and reminders that may help with the submitting process:

You can submit your Facility Survey on-line now at www.facilitysurvey.musco.com. After completing your facility survey, you need to print a copy and attach it to your safety plan before sending to Little League International. Early submission allows your league to be eligible for incentives. You can send both your plan and survey to Little League International at:

Little League International
539 US Route 15 Hwy
PO Box 3485
So. Williamsport, PA 17702

The qualified safety plan registration form has always been a necessary part of your safety plan. If you submit your plan without this form this year, it will show up as reason 14 under the rejections list on Little League’s website: (http://www.littleleague.org/Assets/forms_pubs/asap/RegistrationForm_SafetyProgram_2012.pdf).

After submission you can check the status of your safety plan by going online to http://www.littleleague.org/districtadmins/safetyplanstatus/Safety_Plan_Status.htm. You will need your two digit state abbreviation and district number to see your status. If you are missing steps on your plan, please refer to the following checklist of requirements found at: http://www.littleleague.org/districtadmins/safetyplanstatus/codes.htm.
New This Year and Reminders

ALL safety plans must be submitted with the Qualified Safety Plan Registration form included in the safety office manual packet. Your safety plan will not be shown as received without the form stating who is submitting it, and what league(s) the safety plan covers.

All safety plan materials must be postmarked no later than April 13, 2012 to win the cash award and enter the awards contest.

Leagues working toward the District Incentive must have all requirements approved at Little League International by March 13.

Incentives Reminder

By using the Facility Survey Online at http://facilitysurvey.musco.com to submit your facility survey you’ll be eligible for a weekly drawing for a $50 jacket and a final $500 drawing to be held after the April 13 deadline.

All leagues with a qualified safety plan who take Little League insurance through Chartis Insurance will receive a league cash award. It’s based on the number of teams covered by the safety plan and will be 15 percent of their player accident insurance cost.

Qualified plans will be in the running for a $500 award given to the top two plans in each region. The winning plans will also earn a trip for the president and safety officer to the 2012 Little League Baseball World Series.

The league whose plan is judged to be the best in the US wins a Musco Light-Structure Green™ lighting system equipment for a 200-foot field.
Composite Bat Moratorium Has New Rules for 2012

New rules concerning the bat moratorium issued by Little League in 2010.

To review, the moratorium was placed on all composite-barreled bats for all divisions of Little League Baseball. It does not affect softball bats or bats with barrels composed entirely of wood, aluminum, alloy or metal, exclusive of the end caps.

However, Little League has established that if a composite bat meets both the Bat Performance Factor (BPF) standard and the Accelerated Break-In (ABI) procedure, they will grant a waiver allowing for its use in the appropriate Little League divisions. Last season, some composite bat models received the waiver and were used in the Little, Senior, and Big League Baseball divisions. For the upcoming 2012 season, leagues are encouraged to check the Little League website for a list of 2¼ inch composite barrel bats that have been tested and granted a waiver. http://www.littleleague.org/learn/equipment/approvedcompbatssmall.htm.

For the Junior League Baseball Division in 2012:
1. Bats with composite materials in the barrel must be compliant with BBCOR* standards, and must be labeled as such.
2. Bats with barrels composed entirely of wood, metal, aluminum, or alloy (exclusive of the end cap) are NOT required to be BBCOR compliant.
3. Bats must meet the standards noted in Rule 1.10 for length, diameter, etc. for Junior League play.

For baseball bats, the following will apply for the Senior League and Big League Baseball Divisions in 2012:
1. ALL bats with barrels that are not entirely composed of a single piece of wood must be compliant with BBCOR standards, and must be labeled as such.
2. Bats must meet the standards noted in Rule 1.10 for length, diameter, etc. for Senior/Big League play.

*BBCOR: Batted Ball Coefficient of Restitution – the laboratory test method used to establish performance of a non-wood bat. Check the Little League website for details on standards and required labeling.

Since the moratorium has been in place, many questions have arisen. Below are some of the more frequently asked:

- **How can you identify composite, alloy, etc.?** Most bats indicate whether it is composite or metal/alloy. Look closely at the barrel for its designation and composition. For any others, you would need to check the manufacturer website or call them to see if the specific model has a composite barrel.

- **How does someone identify an older composite bat that is not labeled as composite?** First, a non-wood bat that does not have the BPF of 1.15 printed on it is not allowed to be used in Little League (Majors) play and below. Additionally, composite bats that have the BPF listed, and may even have the Little League name and logo on them, remain subject to the moratorium. If such a bat is not on the waivered list, it cannot be used.

- **Is there still a moratorium on composite-barreled bats for the Majors Division and below?** Yes, the moratorium that was put in place in late 2010 remains in place on composite-barreled bats in the Majors Division and below. A list of the bats that have a waiver of the moratorium, which is updated whenever a new bat is added can be found here: http://www.littleleague.org/learn/equipment/approvedcompbatssmall.htm.

- **What if my bat has a composite handle, and a metal/alloy barrel?** If the bat is labeled as having a composite handle and a metal/alloy barrel (and not a composite barrel), provided it meets all the other specifications and standards for the division, it is acceptable. The transition from the handle to the barrel can be composite.

For more information and a complete list of the questions and answers, go to Little League’s website about the bat moratorium at http://www.littleleague.org/media/newsarchive/2010/Sep-Dec/LLBBCompositeBatMoratoriumFAQ.htm.
Checking all facilities is important before the new season

Inspecting your facilities, playing fields, and parking lots before and throughout the season are important aspects of risk management. Their condition is a major safety factor for everyone involved and should be incorporated into your league’s safety plan.

Below are four areas of concern, a partial list of what to look for initially, and what to track as the season continues. Consider this as a starting point and adapt any of the suggestions to your particular situation. You’ll also want to have an end-of-the-year inspection to help with off-season maintenance and care. Ideally, your safety officer and maintenance director will work together on the inspections and follow ups.

Facilities – Oh, the Lowly Bathrooms

While no one really enjoys looking after the bathrooms, if they haven’t been cared for, then no one is happy. Before the start of the season, you’ll want to check:

- **Faucets, sinks, and toilets** – are they in good working order? A leaking faucet can waste up to 2082 gallons in one year; a leaking toilet can waste 25,000 gallons in a month. (www.abtwater.com)
- **Floors and walls** – do they show cracks, peeling or have missing tiles?

Peeling paint is a health hazard and missing tiles could indicate more will fall, causing a variety of potential problems; cracks in the floor can be tripping hazards and in the walls can indicate a structure problem.

- **Doors** – are they in good working order and can be secured?
- **Hygiene** – are the soap dispensers, hand dryers, and toilet paper dispensers in working order?
- **Do the lights work and are the switches in good repair?**
- **Overall appearance** – clean and well-kept? Is fresh paint in order?

After the initial inspection and any necessary repairs are made, it’s important to make sure the bathroom is adequately stocked. Have the proper supplies been ordered and are they easily accessible to those who are in charge? Have you made a checklist for supplies and cleaning responsibilities? Do you have a sign posted with the contact name or area where someone can go to report a problem?

You’ll need to tailor your own inspection accordingly. Consider enlisting the help of a local restaurant manager or caterer. They can show you what to look for and potential trouble spots. You’ll also need to check your local or state health inspection office to understand what they require for inspections and training.

- **Equipment in good working order?** Everything runs ok and heats/cool to the proper temperatures? Has the proper maintenance been performed on the equipment?
- **Are the right utensils available?** Do you have enough pans, lids, food thermometers, scoops for ice, and disposable serving utensils?
- **Sinks** – are they in good working order and are soap dispensers working?
- **Pest control** – has a qualified person performed an inspection and given you the recommendations to keep the pests away? Are pesticides stored away from food?

You may also want to look into:

- **Toilet paper** – are the dispensers in working order?
- **Hand dryers** – are they in working order?
- **Soap dispensers** – are they in working order?
- **Toilet paper dispensers** – are they in working order?
- **Doors** – are they in good working order and can be secured?
- **Overall appearance** – clean and well-kept? Is fresh paint in order?

Continued next page.
INSPECTIONS, INSPECTIONS, INSPECTIONS!, continued.

- **Fire extinguisher** – a certified fire extinguisher should be stored in plain sight.
- **Are the proper signs securely in place along with emergency contact information?**

Again, once the initial inspection is complete and the necessary repairs made, you’ll need to stock non-food items such as disposable gloves, hair restraints, and cleaning supplies. In addition to having a supplies and cleaning responsibilities checklist, the workers will need training on the equipment, safe food practices, how to use a fire extinguisher, how to handle the money, and who to contact in case of trouble.

**Avoid Parking Lot Headaches**
One area often overlooked in safety inspections is the parking lot. To play it safe, take the time to inspect and follow up on any maintenance needed.

- **Signs** – post signs indicating people are parking at their own risk and your league is not liable for any damage or theft that occurs during activities. Signs can help keep access clear for the handicapped and emergency vehicles. Consider posting areas that are potentially dangerous for errant balls and other equipment.
- **Check for potholes, clear debris, and note any other potential hazards.**

- **Markings** – clearly mark roadways, parking spaces, and crosswalks.
- **Chains or barricades** – use flags or cones to help make them visible to pedestrians and drivers.
- **Drop off areas should be located away from traffic flow.**

Once your initial inspection is complete and the issues are corrected, you’ll want to provide for periodic inspections throughout the season. You’ll also want to plan ahead for high traffic days and ask local law enforcement to help. With minimal training and the proper safety equipment (reflective vests and traffic safety wands), volunteers can make sure the parking lots stay safe.

**Build it and they will come – or even better – inspect it and they’ll play safe**
Your pre-season field inspection should be a part of your overall safety plan along with a regular pre-game checklist. Take a printed copy of your plan and make notes on any changes or improvements your league should consider. Some items to check are:

- **Fencing** – look for holes, exposed or curled wires, and worn areas in the fence cap.
- **Field** – walk through to pick up any debris, fix holes and depressions; check if the warning track, infield edge and baselines are smooth and even.
- **Pitching mound or rubber** – examine for holes and lifted edges.
- **Bases** – assure they are detachable and consider a double bag on first to help prevent collisions.
- **Home plate** – look for depressions in the batter’s box. Check if home plate has the black edge exposed.
- **Dugouts** – seek out any exposed nails and wires, deteriorating boards, and holes.

This list is not complete and won’t address everyone’s particular field situation. Use this as a guide to establish your pre-season and pre-game checks. The Little League website and the Safety Manual are good resources for additional information. The Common Sense database can help you find answers to your specific need. Back copies of the ASAP newsletter are available online and contain more examples of checklists – see March 2008 for some good ideas.

The initial inspection is important and should not be overlooked. Checking all the areas the kids will be in contact with helps keep them, and everyone, safer. Making these inspections a part of your safety plan can remedy hazards before anyone has a chance to get hurt.

One additional step is the end-of-the-season walk-through. It’s a good time to review what happened during the year and make notes on the changes to be made. Care before, during and after the season will keep all your facilities safer for the kids.
Little League Baseball and Softball have always been proactive when the safety and well-being of children, spectators, volunteers and athletes is in play.

Today, concussions have risen to be one of the most concerning injuries that continues to plague athletes at all levels. The treatment of concussions and concussion-like symptoms has evolved over the past few years to the point where many states have passed laws to educate people about concussions, and protect the health and safety of athletes.

Due to the risk of serious injury from playing after the first concussion has occurred, steps must be taken to evaluate players who may have a concussion.

Not every state has adopted concussion laws, and not every state’s concussion law is applicable to a Little League Baseball/Softball program. Some laws are only applicable to school-sponsored athletics, or activities taking place on school-owned property. Other laws are applicable to all youth sports. You should consult with legal counsel in your jurisdiction to determine the applicability of state laws regarding concussions to your program.

In keeping with its focus on protecting the health, safety and welfare of children, Little League International strongly encourages all leagues and teams to not only comply with any applicable state laws, but also, to review and consider implementing in your safety plan the information and training materials on concussions which are available, free of charge, on the Centers for Disease Control website:


More information on how to check out an individual state’s concussion laws can be found by clicking the state link: http://www.littleleague.org/learn/programs/childprotection/concussions.htm.
SUGGESTIONS FROM THE HOT LINE:

Check out these helpful ideas from other leagues.

A member of the safety committee will patrol practices and games to ensure players’ and public safety. This includes the concession stand, spectator, and parking areas.

**Gold Valley, Oregon**

In our Safety Manual, we include a 5-Year Plan for Safety Goals.

**Baugo LL, Indiana**

The safety officer will visit each team periodically to ensure that safety regulations are being followed.

**Pembroke Pine Optimist LL, Florida**

Our accident form includes a space for how this accident could be prevented in the future.

**Santee Pioneer National, California**

The safety officer has a mailbox in the concession stand for reports of unsafe practices or conditions.

**Bolingbrook Associated LL, Illinois**

Included in our safety plan is a map of our entire complex, specifically showing emergency access, first aid, and fire extinguishers.

**Jamul LL, California**

We tape the safety officer’s name and phone number on all first-aid kits.

**Blackwood Kiwanis LL, New Jersey**

There is a mandatory training for all users of the batting cage and pitching machine. The cage will be locked and a key will be needed for entrance. Keys are only issued to those certified to use the cage.

**Hermosa Beach LL, California**

Have a tip to share?
Call the ASAP Hotline at 800-811-7443 today!