



**American Association
of Cheerleading Coaches
& Administrators**

New Study Finds Cheerleading Safety Efforts Are Starting to Pay Off

National cheer safety group vows to keep safety a priority for coaches, administrators

(MEMPHIS, Tenn.) – With an estimated 3 million cheerleaders in the United States alone and a growing number worldwide, the issue of cheerleading safety has risen to the forefront. A new study released today by the National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury Research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill recognizes that there has been an increased emphasis on cheerleading safety in recent years.

The American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators has been dedicated to the issue of cheerleading safety since 1988 when AACCA established the first cheerleading safety standards.

“We have been leading safety initiatives and have seen what we feel has been a trend of reduction in injuries that we feel is based in large part on our efforts,” said Jim Lord, executive director of AACCA, which provides safety training and certification to more than 20,000 coaches. “AACCA is on the front line when it comes to safety.”

In fact, the UNC study cites AACCA’s safety guidelines as part of the progress made in cheer safety.

“It is the opinion of the authors that following cheerleading rules and safety manual guidelines that are written by cheerleading experts is an excellent way to help prevent cheerleading injuries,” the study states. The study also highlights AACCA’s effort to educate parents and cheerleaders about their responsibilities in regards to cheer safety, and AACCA’s contribution to the NCAA’s College Cheerleading Safety Initiative.

“There is so much more that can be done to reduce injuries, and getting information directly to the athletes and parents is a big part of increasing safety awareness,” Lord said.

Lord recognizes that there is still work to be done, but highlights the following developments as further evidence that the attention being devoted to cheer safety is paying off.

- The NCAA’s insurance company, which used to have 25 percent of its claims coming from cheer injuries, has not had a single catastrophic injury claim since 2006, when the NCAA started requiring coaches to get safety training like that provided by the AACCA.



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- According to a National Electronic Injury Surveillance System survey by the Consumer Products Safety Commission, emergency room visits among cheerleaders, which had been increasing every year, have leveled off in the last five years and even declined in some years.

Other recent developments in cheerleading safety include:

- Five years ago, only South Dakota required safety training for its high school cheerleading coaches. Currently, thirteen states require training and many more offer the AACCA safety course at their coaches' conferences. AACCA works with various associations to stress the importance of requiring rules and safety education and we expect that more states will soon join the current list of thirteen.
- The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) developed a Spirit Coaches Education Program, of which one of the courses is the AACCA Safety Course.
- In 2006, AACCA banned basket tosses and 2 ½ high pyramids from the basketball court for college cheerleading and basket tosses for high school (high school teams are already limited to 2 persons high for all skills). And in 2008, AACCA restricted the use of twisting dismounts and other skills.
- In 2006, the NCAA required that each cheer program must have at least one member who has completed a cheerleading safety course.
- In February 2008, AACCA created a policy stating a coach found in violation the AACCA safety rules can lose his/her certification. Some coaches have been cited and we are working with them to ensure compliance with these standards.

For more information about cheerleading safety, visit www.aacca.org.

About AACCA

Formed in 1988 the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators represents more than 20,000 cheerleading coaches and is the leading advocates of cheerleading safety in the U.S.