



Risk Management Considerations for Municipally Run Soap Box Derbies

While “The Little Rascals” may be the first thing that comes to mind when you think of a soap box derby, many organizations are now using them as a way to fundraise. In order to make sure everyone has a safe and enjoyable time, have all your safety measures in place before the day of the race.

Approving the Course

As a municipality, it is your responsibility to make sure that the course chosen for the soap box derby is safe for participants. Have a qualified inspector scope out several locations that would be appropriate for the race. Present these locations to the organizer and allow them to select from your sanctioned choices only. If the organizer does not like your choices, only allow them to pick their own location with the stipulation that the municipality is allowed to inspect and approve it before use. The “track” should be free of all obstructions such as lampposts or trees. The surface should be smooth and even, not slippery.

The length of the track should be adequate for the cars to gain enough momentum to complete the race but not so long that the cars gain too much speed as this increases the risk of crashing and sustaining injuries. Because soap

box cars have limited steering ability, the course should be as straight as possible. It should also be wide enough to race without the danger of running into an adjacent car. Risk Management Considerations for Motor Vehicle Reports

Permits

Once you have agreed on a safe course, ask the organization to apply for a special events permit from your municipality. This gives you an overview of the event and ensures the organizers are fully prepared. Also check that the organizers have the proper insurance coverage. If alcohol is going to be served, make sure that a license has been acquired. After you have confirmed all permits are in order, the organization can proceed with planning.

Inspecting the Course

After completing your initial search for a suitable course, it is imperative to participant safety that you inspect the course before the race takes place. Check that the surface is even and that all potholes have been filled in. All debris should be removed from the surface such as branches and stones. All hazards should be removed; if removal is not possible make sure they are clearly marked. If there are trees or posts near the course, pad or wrap the base in the event that a

competitor should hit them. The padding will reduce injury. Keep records of when all inspections were done, what was found and what changes were made or what precautions were taken. An inspection of the course should be done after the race is finished. Differences in the course before and after the race should be noted.

Road Closures

Soap box derbies race on roads. This means that one or more of the roads in your municipality will need to be closed the day of the race. Ensure adequate barricades are placed around the closed road. Detour signs should be posted so that drivers know where to go. Be sure to post announcements leading up to the race so people are aware that roads will be closed and plan accordingly. If the closed-off area has a high traffic volume, consider having local police direct and monitor traffic to ensure the safety of all involved.

Municipal Checklist

1. Has the organization applied for and obtained the necessary permits?
2. Does the organization have insurance?
3. If there is going to be alcohol, does the organization have a license and insurance for it?
4. Do all parties involved have the necessary permits? (i.e. special events and health permits)
5. Have you helped the organization by warning the public of the street closure?
6. Have you inspected the roads before and after to make sure the streets are safe (free of potholes, sticks etc.)?

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