



Risk Management Considerations for Soap Box Derby Organizers

Soap box derbies are sure to attract many people of all ages. When done correctly, a soap box derby can be a unique way to gain publicity and raise funds for your cause.

Safety Gear

Proper safety gear should be worn by all competitors, regardless of age. Well-fitting helmets should be required and worn with nothing underneath that could affect the function (baseball hats etc.). Proper eyewear such as goggles or safety glasses, gloves, long pants and long sleeved shirts are recommended for all racers. Proper footwear is essential (i.e. running shoes, not flip-flops).

Racing Requirements

In order to safely participate in a soap box derby there are certain requirements that all racers should meet.

1. Minimum age. While you can allow younger racers to participate by creating an easier course, you should still stipulate a minimum age requirement. It is too dangerous for young children to race alone.
2. Height. Racers under a certain height should not be allowed to participate as they may have difficulty seeing the course from inside their soap box car.
3. Weight. Set a maximum weight for each division so that no one has an unfair advantage.

4. Each participant should be required to sign a liability waiver before they are allowed to compete. Anyone under the age of 18 needs to have an adult guardian give consent and sign the participant's waiver with them before they are allowed to race.

Derby Car Specifications

Perhaps the easiest way to ensure safety for all competitors is to set certain requirements that must be met for their race cars.

- Cars should be made of sturdy, shatter-proof material (ex. wood, not fiberglass).
- No sharp objects or protruding edges should be present on cars.
- No nails or screws should be sticking out from the car body.
- Glass should not be used to build the car under any circumstance.
- Each car should have working brakes and a steering wheel for safety.

To help participants design and build safe cars, consider holding a building workshop before the race. This will allow competitors to ask questions and seek guidance from race officials and make sure their car is safe to race. Before the race starts have a qualified inspector examine each car.

The inspector should make sure the car meets the minimum requirements and is in good working condition. This should include testing the brakes. If the car does not pass inspection for whatever reason and cannot be brought up to the requirements before the race, the competitor should not be allowed to participate. After the inspection the cars should be placed in a holding pen with restricted access that is monitored by race officials so no one can tamper with the cars.

Racing Rules

It is always a good idea to create a standard set of rules that must be followed by all competitors. The rules should be handed out to all racers when they register and be posted near the start line on race day. These rules should include, but not be limited to:

- No pushing or shoving other racers
- Riders must go down the hill in a feet-first direction
- No drugs or alcohol are permitted
- All body parts must remain in the car at all times

General Safety

There are many things to consider when holding a soap box derby. The most important is the course that the race will be held on. It should be safe, free of obstacles and as straight as possible. To decrease the risk of racers colliding, consider only letting two or three riders out on the course at a time.

The municipality is responsible for the land the race is being held on and should inspect and approve the course before you hold a derby. It is their responsibility to make sure the area is safe for public use. You should also ask the municipality to close all necessary roads so the course is free of vehicles. To keep spectators safe, create fenced off areas for them to watch so they are not in the way. Accidents can happen when racers lose control of their cars and swerve off the course into the spectator area so make sure that spectators are far enough away and well protected from the race course that they will not be injured if such an incident were to occur. Construct walkways so that spectators can safely cross the racing area without impeding racers or being struck by race cars.

Emergency procedures should be in place for the duration of the event. First aid stations with trained response personnel should be present. All necessary safety equipment such as fire extinguishers should be easily visible and accessible and in perfect working condition. Make sure they have been recently inspected and keep copies of the inspection records.