### Position Statement

Paintball and airsoft gun activities present the potential for injury, including loss of sight and/or loss of an eye. Prevent Blindness strongly encourages that eye protection be required during ALL paintball and airsoft gun activity.

Prevent Blindness further recommends:

- **Paintball participants** must use eye protection meeting or exceeding the requirements of the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) F1776 – Standard Specification for Eye Protection Devices for Paintball.

- **Airsoft participants** must use American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Z87.1 (impact-rated) goggles to protect their eyes.

- The manufacturers and distributors of paintball/airsoft equipment and the owners and operators of commercial paintball facilities must follow appropriate safety standards.

- **Paintball activity** should only be conducted in organized paintball facilities operated and supervised according to ASTM F1777 – Standard Practice for Paintball Field Operation.

- **Paintball and airsoft gun activities** in unsupervised areas, such as backyards and inside homes are strongly discouraged.

- **Paintball markers (airsoft guns)** should be treated with the same safety precautions as firearms. The marker should be placed on “safe” and barrel plugs should be used when exiting a playing field. The marker should be unloaded, de-gassed and locked in a storage unit when not in use.

### Discussion:

In 2007, an estimated 5,476,000 people in the United States played paintball at least once during the year.¹

Findings from a study of 36 patients treated for paintball to the eye found:²

- Injuries were more common in men
- Only one person was injured while wearing eye protection
- Injuries were severe – 28 percent with rupture of the eyeball and 19 percent with detached retina
- Surgery was required in 81 percent of patients
- Removal of the eye (enucleation) occurred in 22 percent
- 20/40 vision or better was restored in only 36 percent
In 2008, eye disorders accounted for 4 percent of injuries caused by air and paintball guns (with a higher rate of these among airsoft guns than paintball).iii

The use of protective eyewear may have eliminated 97% of injuries in paintball users.iv

**Approval:**

This statement was approved by the Prevent Blindness Board of Directors on November 8, 2014.

**Review Date:**

The paintball and airsoft guns position statement will be reviewed again in November 2016.

**References**


