

# Paintball Position Statement

## 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.

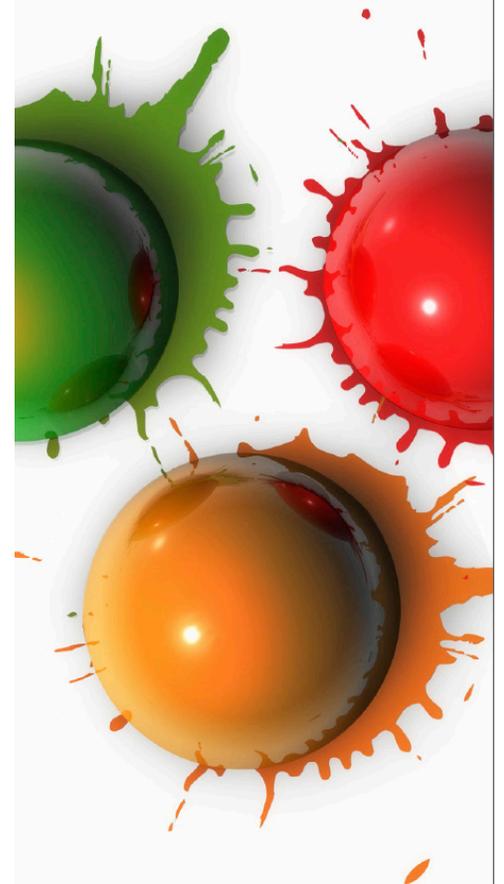
## Discussion:

In 2007, an estimated 5,476,000 people in the United States played paintball at least once during the year.<sup>i</sup>

Findings from a study of 36 patients treated for paintball to the eye found:<sup>ii</sup>

- 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

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# Paintball Position Statement—Continued

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).<sup>iii</sup>

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

## 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

<sup>i</sup> Sports & Fitness Industry Association, Extreme sports: an ever-popular attraction, July 07, 2008. Available at [http://www.sfia.org/press/2\\_Extreme-Sports:-An-Ever-Popular-Attraction](http://www.sfia.org/press/2_Extreme-Sports:-An-Ever-Popular-Attraction). Accessed January 27, 2014.

<sup>ii</sup> Alliman, K et al. Ocular Trauma and Visual Outcome Secondary to Paintball Projectiles, American Journal of Ophthalmology, Volume 147, Issue 2, Pages 239-242.e1, February 2009.

<sup>iii</sup> Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Statistical Brief #119. Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP). Rockville, MD. October 2011. Accessed at [www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb119.jsp](http://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb119.jsp). Accessed on February 5, 2014.

<sup>iv</sup> Alliman, K et al. Ocular Trauma and Visual Outcome Secondary to Paintball Projectiles, American Journal of Ophthalmology, Volume 147, Issue 2, Pages 239-242.e1, February 2009.

