



Catastrophic Injuries in California Sport: 2005-2020

Data Provided by the National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research ([NCCSIR](#))

Summary: From July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2020, NCCSIR captured 131 catastrophic injury/illness events in California sports, 48 of which were fatal: an average of 8.7 catastrophic events per year and 3.2 deaths per year. In California high schools there were 92 catastrophic events and 34 were fatal.

Catastrophic injuries are defined as: fatalities, permanent disability injuries, serious injuries (fractured neck or serious head injury) even though the athlete has a full recovery, temporary or transient paralysis (athlete has no movement for a short time, but has a complete recovery), heat stroke due to exercise, or sudden cardiac arrest or sudden cardiac or severe cardiac disruption.

Of the 131 California state catastrophic injury/illness events:

- 73 (55.7%) were traumatic injury-related, 48 (36.6%) were exertional or medical-related, and 10 (7.6%) were not exertion-related.
 - Most catastrophic events were sudden cardiac arrest (47, 35.9%) or brain injury related (38, 29%)
- 48 (36.6%) were fatal, 29 (22%) resulted in permanent disability, 5 (3.8%) unknown recovery and 49 (37.4%) recovered
- Majority of athletes were male (89%) and played football (59%) or basketball (10%)
- Most occurred during Sep-Oct (37%) and in competitions (54%) or practice (27.5%)

	Fatality				All	
	No		Yes		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
Sport Level						
Collegiate/University	20	24.1%	8	16.7%	28	21.4%
High School Sponsored	58	69.9%	34	70.8%	92	70.2%
Middle School Sponsored	0	0	3	6.3%	3	2.3%
Professional	2	2.4%	1	2.1%	3	2.3%
Youth League Sponsored (e.g., Pop Warner, etc.)	3	3.6%	2	4.2%	5	3.8%
Sponsored Activity						
Official school or team related ATHLETIC activity (e.g. official practice, team strength/fitness training or competition)	78	94.0%	37	77.1%	115	87.8%
Other	5	6.0%	6	12.5%	11	8.4%
Personal athletic activity (e.g. individual strength/fitness or practice, non-team related)	0	0	5	10.4%	5	3.8%

Note: Events are captured through a variety of methods including: searches of publicly available news and media sources, reports from state high school associations and/or schools, and reports from individuals. There may be catastrophic events that NCCSIR has not captured. Starting in 2015 anyone can report a catastrophic sport injury at our website sportinjuryreport.org.