

*Football Helmet  
Reconditioning in  
Unprecedented  
Conditions*



# ***Football Helmet Reconditioning In Unprecedented Conditions***

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## ***Background***

The COVID-19 pandemic upset the typical plans of being ready for football in the fall. There was some level of disruption from the NFL to the youngest ages. Some programs started their seasons around their normal time. Others put on hold until the winter or spring and there are some that were shut down entirely.

The questions surrounding this unexpected situation led the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) and National Athletic Equipment Reconditioners Association (NAERA) to collaborate on a video “Football Helmet Reconditioning in Unprecedented Conditions.”

In this video, NAERA Executive Director Tony Beam and NAERA President Bob Fawley share their expertise with NSGA Team Dealer Division and Communications Director Marty Maciaszek to provide some guidance to the reconditioning process during the COVID-19 pandemic where numerous high schools and colleges are planning to play in the spring of 2021. It is a resource tool for football coaches, athletic directors, school and program administrators, members of the sporting goods industry and the media.

This document is a synopsis of the video that begins with introductions of Tony Beam and Bob Fawley and their background in the industry. The times listed are the points in the video where a particular topic or question is addressed. We hope you will refer to the video for more detail on those areas.

Go to <https://www.nsga.org/advocacy/covid-19-resource-page/covid-19-video-resources/> for the video.



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## ***Video Synopsis***

### ***4:30 – How many helmets are reconditioned every year?***

Last year around 1.7 million helmets were reconditioned by 15 members licensed by NOCSAE (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) to recondition and recertify football and lacrosse helmets and sanitize sports equipment. It is usually between 1.7 and 1.9 million per year.

### ***5:20 – What is typically involved in the process of reconditioning football helmets and how long does it take?***

Buffing, sanding, cleaning, sanitizing, painting, disassembly and reassembly, facemasks taken off and put back on. All parts are evaluated and bad ones are replaced. Required NOCSAE testing protocol completed. It typically takes two weeks to get an order through a reconditioning plant but products may be in line for several months. Customers are usually asked when they want their products returned and production is based on those requests.

### ***7:20 – Why is it important to find a NAERA helmet reconditioner and how many are there?***

Only NOCSAE licensed reconditioners can recertify football, lacrosse, baseball and softball helmets. All NAERA members are licensed with NOCSAE. Slides with locations and contact information for the 15 NAERA members are in the video.



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## ***Video Synopsis Continued***

***8:40 – What is NAERA’s relationship with NOCSAE in the process and at what point do helmets need to be reconditioned? How often should they be reconditioned and when are they no longer allowed to be used?***

A few years ago NAERA adopted a 10-year life cycle for football helmets which was agreed upon by manufacturers. Recertification is tied to the helmet warranty and most manufacturers recommend doing it at annually or at least every other year. Approximately 90 percent of high schools and colleges do it every year to make sure every helmet is cleaned, sanitized, meets the NOCSAE standards and to avoid potential liability exposure.

In January 2017, NOCSAE made an addition to its standard ND 001 6.1.1 asking all manufacturers to state what interval a helmet needs to be reconditioned to maintain its certification. NAERA works closely with NOCSAE Executive Director Mike Oliver and Beam and Fawley have input on the process as voting members of its board of directors.



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## ***Video Synopsis Continued***

### ***13:30 – How much was the reconditioning process impacted this spring and summer by COVID-19?***

Fawley's reconditioning facility at Capitol Varsity Sports in Oxford, Ohio, was shut down in mid-March for eight weeks by COVID-19. Most reconditioners start in November or December of given year, so the missed time of anywhere between 3 to 11 weeks, had a major impact on everybody.

Whether it's a youth league, high school, college program or NFL team, you need to get the equipment in as soon as your season is done. If you finish your last game on a Friday or Saturday, hopefully a reconditioner is picking it up Monday. Those who got their equipment in right away may have faced some delays and issues with shipping but the product was put through the reconditioning and recertification process.



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## ***Video Synopsis Continued***

***20:20 – How will the overall process be affected by programs planning to play late-winter and early-spring schedules and hoping to return to a traditional fall schedule in 2021? Will certain aesthetic parts of the process such as helmet painting have to be bypassed?***

With a lot of states deciding to play in the spring, helmets with a 2020 label in them but used in the spring of 2021 will still be certified in most cases. There are exceptions, you should check with your reconditioner or reach out to NAERA if you have questions. The turnaround of schools playing in the spring of 2021 and trying to play in the fall of 2021 is short. We're confident we can do that but the timing of getting equipment back is important. Teams playing in the spring need to be in contact with their reconditioner.

A helmet doesn't have to be painted or decaled to meet NOCSAE and NAERA reconditioning and recertification standards. No safety shortcuts will be taken and it's still recommended it's done yearly. Recertification ensures the helmet functions correctly and sanitization, more than ever, is very important. Those helmets need to be reconditioned and recertified and they're going to get sanitized.



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## ***Video Synopsis Continued***

### ***25:30 – The importance of reconditioning shoulder pads***

Shoulder pads don't need to be recertified and aren't part of a NOCSAE standard now. Most reconditioners get about a third of shoulder pads in and most end up laying in a locker room and nothing happens to them until they are put on a kid the next year. With COVID it is very critical for schools to look at shoulder pads and all equipment and make sure it's cleaned and sanitized before coming back into a new cycle.

Most junior high and youth leagues don't sanitize shoulder pads. They can be checked to make sure all the rivets are in place and straps are where they are supposed to be. A lot of times they are put in a non-climate controlled building and sweat is left to fester a long time before they are put on a player.

Any products – baseball and softball chest protectors and shin guards - all need to be considered when looking at budgets.





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## ***Video Synopsis Continued***

***29:00 – How will schools playing this spring impact the process for schools trying to play a traditional schedule this fall and states that typically hold spring practices?***

The difference this coming year is states and programs that traditionally don't play spring football and they'll be sending in their gear later. We have to get it as quickly as possible. It will change the dynamics of when you get your stuff and how busy we are.

With the advent of summer passing camps the timeline has become shortened for us. There was a time high schools didn't care if they got the helmets in June, July or a week before they went to two-a-days. There has been a push to have helmets earlier before summer stuff begins. The reality for high schools is some of the summer stuff will probably occur without helmets back to the school yet.





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## ***Video Synopsis Continued***

***32:00 – If a school or program is planning to play in the spring of 2021 and looking to return to a fall schedule in 2021, can they wait to get their helmets reconditioned until after the fall 2021 season?***

NAERA recommends they recondition and recertify prior to the next season of play. We must stress whatever the interval is between seasons, you're playing a season. Different kids will be wearing the helmets and equipment in the fall from the spring. It should come in and be reconditioned and recertified and we can't stress enough it's going to be sanitized. Equipment should be sanitized after you played a season or practice period.

The NAERA member puts in a sticker certifying a helmet for that season. Liability costs have skyrocketed and NAERA members are going to be very uneasy about telling you to go ahead and play that second season with my certification sticker on there. It comes down to a school's level of risk tolerance.



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## ***Video Synopsis Continued***

***35:00 – If a school or youth program started to play in the fall or spring and only played 1 or 2 games before the season was shut down are they still required to get helmets recertified and reconditioned?***

NAERA certainly recommends they do that. Sanitization is very important in the time of COVID. The helmets will also be inspected to make sure they are working correctly.

***36:00 – If a team only has a few practices in helmets and shoulder pads and gets shut down do they need to get them in for reconditioning and recertification?***

The same thing applies as it would for just a couple of games. It comes down to what is a school willing to take on as a liability risk? NAERA recommends they be done annually as do the manufacturers. It's a decision that shouldn't be taken lightly or without administrative involvement in the decision.



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## ***Video Synopsis Continued***

***37:45 – For colleges, high schools and youth programs that don’t have a season, how does that year off impact their reconditioning requirements?***

NAERA certainly recommends yearly certification of the product. At most schools, if they weren't playing, the helmets were on players' heads or distributed. You want to get them back to make sure they are still functioning the way they are supposed to. A lot of youth programs go every other year, so depending on when you did them last, you want to consider getting them back in. The season may only be two weeks, but it was still a season and products were sweated in, so you want to make sure they are all sanitized.

***40:00 – With the ongoing concern of the spread of COVID-19, for programs that will be able to play, what can players and coaches do in-season to sanitize helmets and shoulder pads while making sure they are not damaging the product?***

We've seen a number of companies that have "mistors" that spray a locker room. You must be prudent about wiping down and making sure cleaning is an ongoing process. NAERA always recommends following manufacturer guidelines for equipment care.



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## ***Video Synopsis Continued***

***42:30 – We all want to see football back in 2020-21. What advice would you give to be prepared for the challenges ahead?***

Listen to people in the industry and take their advice. The challenging thing is everything is different state-to-state and within states. We're always available for questions. NAERA can't stress enough to stay in contact with your reconditioner. A lot of people don't understand that process of getting everybody back and ready to play. Keep in mind it's time-consuming and this coming year there will be a lot more sanitizing to do.



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## ***Reminder of NAERA's 10-Year Helmet Policy***

- NAERA has a 10-year policy where football helmets will not be recertified by a NAERA member 10 years after they were manufactured.
- In accordance with the NAERA's 10-year policy, a football helmet with an initial season of 2011 could not be recertified by a NAERA member for 2021.
- There is no “extra year” for helmets with an initial season of 2011 if a team didn't play a 2020 season. A helmet's lifespan is not connected to non-use and a 2011 helmet would be outside the NAERA 10-year policy.
- Helmets with an initial season of 2011 are outside of the NAERA 10-year policy for use in the winter, spring and fall of 2021. NAERA members could not recertify them for 2021.



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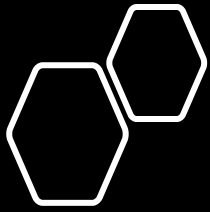
## ***Questions?***

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