



Ankin Law Office LLC

Protecting the Rights of Injured Workers

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FTC to Investigate Football Helmet Claims in Attempt to Increase Safety

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The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is currently examining the marketing practices and claims made by Riddell and other leading manufacturers of football helmets that their football helmets help reduce concussions. The FTC agreed to look into the marketing claims at the prompting of Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.Mex) who believes that the helmet manufacturers use “misleading safety claims and deceptive practices” to sell their helmets.

The chairman of the FTC agreed, in a letter to Sen. Udall, that there are “serious concerns” regarding the manufacturers’ marketing claims and that “[g]iven the dangers that concussions pose for young athletes engaged in contact sports, it is essential that advertising for products claiming to reduce the risk of this injury be truthful and substantiated.”

Sen. Udall is particularly concerned with Riddell’s claims on its website that “research shows a 31 percent reduction in the risk of concussion in players wearing a Riddell Revolution football helmet when compared to traditional helmets.” He states that there is very little scientific evidence to support this claim and that the voluntary industry standard fails to address claims regarding the reduction or prevention of concussions.

The FTC could choose to proceed in a number of ways. It could decide to launch a formal investigation into the claims, which could result in formal charges of deceptive advertising or a cease-and-desist order.

Efforts to Prevent Concussions

This is not Sen. Udall’s first prompting of increased football helmet safety. Last fall, he asked the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to investigate the safety standards for football helmets to determine whether they are adequate to prevent concussions in young players. According to the CPSC, the commission plans to assist with the improvement of [helmet safety standards](#) and testing mechanisms.

Football helmet safety has received increased attention in recent years since a study in 2000 revealed that more than 60 percent of the 1,090 former NFL players surveyed had suffered at least one concussion in their careers, and more than 26 percent had suffered three or more concussions. Those who had suffered concussions during their football career had increased problems with memory, concentration, speech, headaches and other neurological problems

A concussion occurs when the head accelerates quickly and then suddenly stops or is rapidly rotated, and can occur even if the head does not come into contact with a hard surface. During a concussion, the brain cells depolarize and fire all their neurotransmitters at once, causing the brain to become filled with chemicals that can weaken the parts of the brain linked to learning and memory. A concussion can result in confusion, blurred vision, memory loss, nausea and, in some severe cases, unconsciousness.

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Lack of Safety Standards and Effect on Incidence of Concussions

Currently, football helmet manufacturers have little oversight. A recent [New York Times article](#) reports that the only industry standard, established by a voluntary industry consortium in 1970s, requires that helmets withstand a 60-inch free fall without excessive force reaching the skull. The standards have not been enhanced, altered or amended since the 1970s when this standard was established in an attempt to prevent skull fractures. The standard has achieved its goal by virtually eliminating skull fractures in football, but the number of concussions has continued to rise.

The lack of helmet safety standards is especially troublesome with respect to youth athletics. The *Times* article estimates that more than 100,000 young football players are wearing helmets too old to provide adequate protection, and that an estimated 500,000 may be wearing helmets that are **potentially unsafe** and require critical examination.

Any parents concerned about their child suffering a traumatic **brain injury** or concussion as a result of an inadequate football helmet should consider **contacting** the **knowledgeable Chicago personal injury lawyers** at Ankin Law Offices to discuss the facts of their child's football helmet injury.

Howard Ankin of Ankin Law Office LLC (www.ankinlaw.com) handles workers' compensation and personal injury cases. Mr. Ankin can be reached at (312) 346-8780 and howard@ankinlaw.com.

By [Admin - CO](#)
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