



15 June 2015

**Safety Principles for  
ARA medium contact foam weapons combat activities  
(Boffering and LARP)**

ARA members around Australia enjoy foam weapons combat activities as part of their re-enactment activities as ARA members in accordance with the list of activities submitted to the ARA insurer for PL cover in 2012 as follows:

- ARA Members *'do other activities such as training and practice (that may or may not be in historical costume)'*
  - Activities include: *'mock battle re-enactments'*,
  - Events include: *'training sessions/drills and practices, ... events run by other groups'*
- *'Member groups and individuals also participate in activities that may not be historical in nature'*

While foam weapons combat activities do fall within the description of activities covered under the ARA PL policy as per the list of activities submitted to the insurer, inquiries from ARA members have prompted the ARA to define safety rules for foam weapons combat activities to ensure that all such activities are compliant with ARA PL Insurance.

Medium contact foam weapons combat activities are often run with a greater sense of fun and recreation than much of the rest of the ARA's more strictly authentic re-enactment activities but ARA Members are still expected to comply with the letter, spirit and intent of the ARA Constitution, By Laws, Code of Conduct, Policies and Practices and relevant legislation.

At the event you are welcome to make use of gaming systems or event rules that are used by other organisations (*such as LarpCraft gaming rules etc*) subject to compliance with these ARA Safety Principles for medium contact foam weapon activities.

The types of hits are to be agreed by the combatants or they can be at the discretion of the host group or they can be based on other LARP combat systems that are compatible with the ARA Safety Principles for medium contact foam weapon activities below.

# **Safety Principles for ARA Medium contact Foam weapons combat activities (Boffering and LARP)**

## **Section 1: General Safety**

Foam combat activities are medium contact, *meaning we do not swing full force with weapons*, all blows are delivered with the minimum force necessary for a combatant to feel the blow from a foam weapon in the armour that they are wearing. Physical contact brawling (or sashed play), is only allowed by experienced combatants after the necessary training.

All weapons must follow the specifications listed in this document to prevent injury. Armour and accessories should not have hard corners or sharp spikes that could cut or impale anyone. Everything you use in game is checked every game.

Do not aim for the head, neck or groin with weapons or thrown objects. Excessive accidental shots to these locations may lead to you not being able to use a weapon during the rest of the game. Combatants who duck or dodge into blows on purpose with these locations can face similar disciplinary actions. If you do hit someone in these locations please apologize and make efforts to avoid doing so again.

**We recommend combatants wear head, eye and groin protection if you are going to participate in physical combat. Do not wear anything (including glasses) into combat that has a risk of breaking.**

You may be asked to rest or leave a game if a combat marshal suspects you of being unfit to continue play or are a safety hazard to yourself or others. (ex: Heat, dehydration, improper clothing, attitude, etc).

## **Section 2: Classification of Event/Activity Types: Light , Medium and High Immersion**

At the event you are welcome to make use of gaming systems or event rules that are used by other organisations (*such as LarpCraft gaming rules etc*) subject to compliance with the ARA Safety Principles for foam weapon combat.

The ARA supports and welcomes all styles of play and we understand that some members that are just starting off don't have the means to run medium or high immersion events. These classifications are put into place so combatants do not have the wrong type of expectation for a game/event and allows people to better plan for events and what is required of them when traveling to another host group's event.

Game rules are written with high immersion in mind. Host groups should indicate what immersion level an event is in the event listing details. If they don't, please ensure you ask them before signing up.

### **Light Immersion and training sessions**

Many host groups just starting out will fit into this category and the goal for them is often just to have fun, learn the game and recruit new members. Low Immersion games and training sessions are not always in costume and combatants might have some garb, a mix of duct tape, boffer and store bought weapons. Some combatants will probably be in street clothes and have little roleplaying/reenacting experience. Combat marshals are also far more lenient to what counts as armour but weapons still need to be safe and to ARA specifications. Medium and high immersion groups can host light immersion games but will often specify this clearly in their event.

### **Medium Immersion**

These events may have full garb requirements and rarely allow street clothes. There may be a few duct tape weapons and these groups/events may start to have better props and period looking tents. New combatants should talk to a Combat Marshal before coming to a medium immersion event to know what is expected of them. Medium Immersion host groups often have authentic costumes made out of real leathers, metals and heavy cloth.

### **High Immersion**

These host groups are those who try to do everything possible to recreate medieval history and fantasy with full props, complete costumes and superb roleplay. High immersion sets can be breathtaking with authentic meals, excellent props and detailed costumes. Combatants may rarely break their character and you may even be penalized for doing so in some fashion. These groups may have a special training area where new combatants are taught about the event hosts specific activity before they are allowed into the setting.

High Immersion host groups will have authentic costumes made out of real leathers, metals and heavy cloth and many in high immersion will pay attention to every detail from boots to pouches.

### **Section 3: Prohibited items**

#### **What Not To Bring:**

- Do not bring any real weapons. This is an activity for foam weapons only.
- Do not bring Alcohol or Illegal drugs. Some activities, events or overnight games may allow alcohol but you will need to carry your ID (18 and over only) and get permission before this is allowed. Always check with the Event Host a few days before an event on whether or not you can bring Alcohol or Tobacco products to an event.
- Do not bring a bad attitude.
  - Do not come into a foam weapons combat activity game expecting to kill everyone and win the day. You are likely to experience disappointment with this kind of mindset.
  - Do not attend a foam weapons combat activity expecting the same standards of historical authenticity that you may be used to seeing at other ARA re-enactment events. You may be happier restricting your ARA activities to metal weapons re-enactment events.

## Section 4: Combat Rules

### How Hits Are Scored & Called

This is entirely up to the ARA members participating or it may be at the discretion of the Host Group bearing in mind, at all times that:

1. Full force blows are not permitted under any circumstances.
2. Blows should be delivered with minimum force necessary for an opponent to acknowledge a blow in the armour they are wearing.

Again, this is medium contact so a swing can be full blown, but you must pull your blow (slow it down before contacting the opponent) so the actual strike is not hard (therefore not full force). This allows the use of more theatrical looking weapons instead of only bulky boffers.

The ARA will not decide for you how to score your combat. At the event you are welcome to make use of scoring systems such that are used by other organisations subject to compliance with the ARA Safety Principles for foam weapon combat.

*Eg: LarpCraft uses a simplistic hit system where the armour points are global, yet the hits are local. This means that in order for things like armour to count, the area of the body that was hit must be covered with armour. The global count simply makes it easier to keep track of.*

The person receiving the blow will decide what a legal hit is and what is not. Defenders must call their hits. Combatants who abuse this will be removed from the game. If there is a doubt, please just take the hit.

### Combat area:

The combat area must be defined prior to the commencement of the combat activities including out-of-bounds areas and areas for non-combatants and spectators. If you run out of the combat area to avoid being killed, you will die. An example of this is someone cornered and running out the designated combat area and into a known out of bounds area to avoid being killed.

### Target Areas & What To Avoid

Theatrical weapons like the ones used in this activity are not typically designed for thrusting or hard blows. Serious injury can result of improper hits and thus Combat marshals will take these types of infractions seriously for the safety of the combatants. That being said, glances and accidents happen so **it is the combatants responsibility to protect themselves from accidents.**

Please refrain from hitting someone in the face, head or groin. With all due caution, we ask that you do everything you can to avoid hitting someone in the head and rather roleplay a strike for things like decapitation, etc. Remember that foam quickly moved against the skin can cause friction burns so even those types of moved are not recommended. ***That being said, in the heat of a battle, accidents happen and lots of foam is flying around so if you are going to be engaging in physical combat in any way, shape or form, you are expected to protect your face, eyes, groin or anyplace else you don't want to be hit.***

Hands and feet may count when hit and are the easiest targets. Be sure to armour those parts of the body to avoid an easy strike.

### Glasses

It is advised that those who play in the games wear athletic type eye protection. This game involves battles, running and other physical movement which can damage regular glasses or cause injury if the glasses are knocked or pushed into someone's face.

Combat marshals may not let you battle if you are not properly protected. Sure, this is tag with foam sticks but anytime you swing anything at anyone, there are risks involved. If you don't want to engage in physical combat, please ensure that you remain outside of the designated combat area and wear a non combatants band as described later.

## **Types of Hits**

At the event you are welcome to make use of gaming systems or event rules that are used by other organisations (*such as LarpCraft gaming rules etc*) subject to compliance with the ARA Safety Rules for medium contact foam weapon activities.

The types of hits are to be agreed by the combatants or they can be at the discretion of the host group or they can be based on other LARP combat systems that are compatible with the ARA safety Rules for medium contact foam weapon activities.

Some guidelines from other systems are:

1. **Limb Hits** - A limb hit is a hit to the arm (between the wrist and top of shoulder) or leg (between ankle and top of hip). Once a limb is hit, it is considered destroyed and cannot be used until the combatant is killed or healed. The loss of any three (3) limbs is considered the same as death. If a combatant loses a leg, it is NOT recommended they raise it up and hop on the good leg. To keep balance, please just drag the leg behind you.
2. **Mortal Wounds** - A mortal wound is caused when you are hit anywhere in the torso - the area between your waistline and your collar bones, this includes your back. After taking a mortal wound hit, that combatant is now in the bleed out state below.
3. **Bleeding Out** - Combatants in the state of bleeding out act as though they are in great pain. They can stand, stagger, and fight, but must hold their chest as to simulate holding an open wound (if you are hit in the back just hold your chest). Bleeding out takes about 5 minutes and in the event the combatant does not receive proper care, they will die and need to be resurrected or will need to go back to the spawn point. The arm holding the chest must be undamaged and not holding a weapon or shield

## **'Engaging' an opponent**

"Engaged" means to occupy the attention or efforts of (a person or persons) by means of attacking them. If the combatant is actively in battle, or conflict by being physically attacked they are considered "engaged". Being engaged also means being physically attacked with a ranged or melee weapon, charged at with the intent to attack.

Any variations from this may be at the discretion of the participants on the day or by the host group. Please check before commencing the activity.

## **Dying**

When a combatant dies, they simply place their weapon or fist above their head and seek out a 'healer' who can perform resurrection or visit a resurrection/spawn site that is set up by the Combat marshal team of that game.

## **Section 5: Sashed Combat**

Sashed combat is a more advanced form of combat for more experienced combatants

1. Full force blows are still prohibited and blows must be with minimum force necessary for a combatant to acknowledge in the armour they are wearing.
2. The groin and head are not deliberately aimed for but accidental hits to the groin and head count as actual hits. *Please even though they count DO NOT aim for groin or head / roleplay a non contact blow).*
3. Sashed combatants are allowed to safely grapple, stage brawl (roleplayed only), light jabs (depending on the weapon and combatant/Combat marshal comfort level), and roleplayed shield bash with other Sashed combatants.

Although you may think this all sounds great and fun, you must know that to become a Sashed combatant, you more than likely will have to pass several tests at the discretion of the host group or at the event before you can become a Sashed combatant. Tests to become a Sashed combatant will be decided upon by your local group Combat marshals usually before a game or at a training session. These tests are to prove that you, as a combatant, can grasp and use the abilities of being a Sashed combatant responsibly. If at any time your Combat marshals believe you are not able to use the abilities in a safe or controlled manner, they can and will remove your Sashed combatant status. If you are found using Sashed combat without the credentials to do so, disciplinary action will be taken.

How do you tell if a person is a Sashed combatant? A Sashed combatant must have a wrapping around their body of a contrasting color. So if a combatant has a light colored sash, it would need to wrap it in a dark rope or cloth to show that "Yes, this is most definitely a combatant sash and not just part of someone's costume". Please check with your combat marshals to ensure compliance.

### **How the rules change for combatants interacting with Sashes on:**

If you are in a group battle and one combatant doesn't have a sash on, none of the sash combatants can use the sash rules. It is too hard to switch modes when fighting side by side with a sash and non-sash combatant.

If everyone does have a sash on:

1. Safe and prudent shield bashing and pushing on flat end of shields is allowed. You cannot control the other persons shield however.
2. Combatants can grapple, push, and fake fight if it is deemed safe to do so.
3. Light jabs with approved weapons may be allowed.
4. Stronger weapon contact is allowed as long as it is safe and prudent.
5. Cannot have a game sash on when in total darkness.

To qualify for Sashed combat you must:

1. Be at least 18 years of age.
2. Be able to prove to Combat marshals that you are responsible enough and know the rules of the Sash combat system.
3. You cannot wear Sash if you have consumed alcohol.

Sash privileges can be revoked by:

1. Using Sash combat with a non-Sash combatant.
2. Not practicing safe and sportsmanlike conduct.
3. Bringing the Sash up in game for anything other than game play rule

## **Section 6: Non-Combatants**

Don't want to do combat? No problem! The ARA requires all non-combatants at foam weapons events to wear a yellow or orange band on their left wrist or left hip in full view of all combatants. So if you would just rather explore, sell, trade and do non-combat activities that is perfectly fine. You will not be engaged into a battle situation.

### **Band Placement**

All bands should be on the combatants left hip, arm or wrist so they can be clearly seen by all other combatants. They can't be tucked under armour, costumes or props. If you have a question as to if your bands are in an OK part of your body, please ask a Combat marshal for approval before you start playing.

Check with the host group and Combat Marshals on the day if you have any questions on how to use a non-combatants band to ensure that you will not be engaged in combat as a non-combatant

## **Section 7: Weapons**

At the event you are welcome to make use of gaming systems or event rules that are used by other organisations (*such as LarpCraft gaming rules etc*) subject to compliance with the ARA Safety Rules for medium contact foam weapon activities.

The types of weapons are to be agreed by the combatants or they can be at the discretion of the host group or they can be based on other LARP combat systems that are compatible with the ARA safety Rules for medium contact foam weapon activities.

All homemade Weapons need at least 1" (2.5 cm) of foam on the striking surface. Tips should have at least 2" (5 cm) before the core. Core tips should be taped inside. You cannot excessively weight a Weapon or use metal in any part of the design (inside or out).

We do not recommend duct tape on the surface of any striking weapon. Cover it in fabric to avoid scratching combatants. **Local Combat marshals will decide if your Weapon is too harsh to use.**

You will notice we don't use the words "sword", "axe", etc. This is so any Weapon can be used as long as it is foam / latex and meets the padding requirements. All Weapons must first go through a safety check with the combat marshals at the time of signup.

### **Weapon Size**

Every Weapon has, in one form or another, a limit on its size. Weapons are measured from tip to end.

### **Weapon Flex**

Weapons should be fairly firm with minimal wobble when flexed. Too much Weapon whip is a safety concern. An example is a pole arm that has a core too thin to support the foam and stress. These cores can break from that kind of flex. This is checked at registration.

### **Holstered Weapon Blocking**

A Weapon can be holstered on a combatants side, back etc. and if a strike hits only the Weapon (and not the combatant) it can block a hit. This would also count for arrows but it can't touch the combatant, only the Weapon (which is rarely the case, it almost always hits the holstered Weapon AND the combatant). If the strike hits the holstered Weapon AND the combatant, the hit counts. Combat marshals or Chief Combat marshals hold the power to stop excessive exploitation of this allowance.

### **Inappropriately Sized Weapons**

A combatant cannot use a Weapon that is of incorrect size.

## Section 8: Armour

At the event you are welcome to make use of gaming systems or event rules that are used by other organisations (*such as LarpCraft gaming rules etc*) subject to compliance with the ARA Safety Rules for medium contact foam weapon activities.

The types of weapons are to be agreed by the combatants or they can be at the discretion of the host group or they can be based on other LARP combat systems that are compatible with the ARA safety Rules for medium contact foam weapon activities.

Armour helps defend you so you can outlast your enemy.

Subject to the agreed rules of the day or at the discretion of the host group, a combatant may be able to use all, some, or no armour including shields.

A Weapons and Armour inspection will make sure your armour cannot impale combatants via large spikes or will not be a safety issue, etc.

From an immersion and role play standpoint it really does work better and takes far more skill if armour must be hit to count. To enhance roleplay and immersion, combatants should take off armour that is damaged after a battle and get it mended.

### Armour Safety

Armour must fit a combatant well and be free of broken straps so that it doesn't fall off in combat. Armour cannot have any points on it that would endanger you or others around you. Armour should not pinch or bind on a combatant and it is recommended that if you wear any armour that you have a gambeson on. Combat Marshals must inspect your armour before the game starts. If the edges are too sharp, it will not be allowed (think of it as "would this rip a foam weapon if it caught my armour"). Helms must be padded in order to be used.

### Armour Definitions

1. **No Armour, Cloth or Fur:** Anyone can wear any of these items at any time.
2. **Light Armour:** Leather, Studded Leather, Hardened Leather. Must be at least 8 oz. leather (about 1/8" thick) unless otherwise approved by local group.
3. **Medium Armour:** Scale mail, Splint mail, Banded mail, Brigantine, and Chainmail (Maille). This also includes leather armour reinforced with steel plating that covers a minimum of 50% of the armour.
4. **Heavy Armour:** Ridged Metal armour as in Plate Maile. Must be 16 gauge metal plating or thicker unless otherwise approved by local group.

### Armour Locations

1. **Torso Armour:** This Includes chest and back armours, and must cover at least one half (left or right, top or bottom) of your front AND back torso.
5. **Head Armour (Helms):** This includes Coifs, and Helms.
6. **Shoulder Armour:** This includes Neck and Shoulders, such as a gorget, spaulders, pauldrons, etc. Must cover both left and right shoulders.
7. **Upper Arm Armour:** This can include the lames on a set of spaulders/pauldrons, or a separate piece just for the bicep region. Must cover both left and right upper arms.
8. **Lower Arm Armour:** This includes Bracers, Vambrace, and Cowters. Must cover both left and right lower arms.
9. **Hand Armour:** This includes Gauntlets and Gloves. Must cover both left and right hands.
10. **Waist and Hip Armour:** This includes Large belts no less than 6" (inches) wide, cod pieces, and Tassets. Must cover both left and right hips.
11. **Upper Leg Armour:** This includes upper legs / thigh area, Cuisses, and Tassets. Must cover both left and right thighs.
12. **Lower Leg Armour:** This includes Lower legs, Poleyn, and Greaves. Must cover both left and right lower legs.
13. **Foot Armour:** This includes sabatons, leather or chain boot / foot coverings. Must not impede ability to walk or be a safety hazard. Must cover both left and right feet.

## **Section 9: Shields**

At the event you are welcome to make use of gaming systems or event rules that are used by other organisations (*such as LarpCraft gaming rules etc*) subject to compliance with the ARA Safety Rules for medium contact foam weapon activities.

The types of shields are to be agreed by the combatants or they can be at the discretion of the host group or they can be based on other LARP combat systems that are compatible with the ARA safety Rules for medium contact foam weapon activities.

There are 4 sizes of shields that a combatant can use. Below are the descriptions of each shield type. All shields must pass tech inspection / weapons check. Shields are to be of heavy foam with fiberglass or like material inside. Edges are to be thicker if homemade and Combat Marshals will check that the handles do not pose a threat of injury to those holding the shield. You should have 2-3" (5-8 cm) of foam over the main area of the shield.

If the combatant wears a shield on their back, it can still be counted as a shield, not armour. If it is broken with cleaving blows, it will have to be removed.

### **Shield Definitions**

#### **Buckler**

- Size - Up to 14" in diameter (35.5 cm) from edge to edge
- Bucklers can be handheld or strapped to the arm. If strapped to the arm, you may still wield a weapon in the same hand that the shield is strapped to. This is not the same as putting your arm through one strap and gripping the other, this means the buckler is independently strapped to your forearm.

#### **Medium Shield**

Size - From 14.5" in diameter Up to 20" in diameter (51 cm) from edge to edge

#### **Large Shield**

Size - From 20.5" in diameter Up to 34" in diameter (86 cm) from edge to edge

#### **Tower or XL Shield**

Size - MAX length 48" (122 cm) MAX width 36" (91.5 cm)

(ANY shield larger than 34" (81 cm) in diameter, length, or width, is considered an extra-large shield.)