

Information Letter n°4-08
5 March 2008

Mask with a transparent visor
Results of the investigations carried out by the FIE – SEMI Commission

LETTRE D'INFORMATION DE LA FIE

Dear Mr/ Madam President,

In the urgent letter 2-08, the FIE informed the national federations that, following an accident which occurred in Barquisimeto (Venezuela) during an épée training session and involving a mask with a transparent visor, the FIE had taken the decision to temporarily suspend the mandatory use of transparent masks at the Grand Prix competitions in foil, until the end of the investigation carried out to determine the exact circumstances of the causes of this accident. This decision was taken due to the vagueness of the information received.

Mr Eduardo Dos Santos, President of the SEMI Commission, went to Barquisimeto on 31 January and 1 February 2008 and contacted the fencer Luymar Hernandez directly.

The fencer was recuperating and recovering from the accident that took place on 23 November 2007 during an épée training session held at the club Lara. Mr Luymar Hernandez had touched the foot of his opponent, who, at the same time, had hit the visor of Mr Hernandez's mask. The mask had broken; a piece of the visor, approximately 6 x 2 cm in size, had chipped off.

The accident therefore did not involve a blade going between the visor and the wire-mesh.

The circumstances of the accident, as well as the shape of the broken piece of visor, lead to the conclusion that the accident was probably due to chemical damage to the visor. We must draw attention to the fact that the fencer refused to hand the mask in question over to the SEMI Commission.

Meanwhile, a similar accident occurred with the fencer Tomer Or (ISR) who was wearing a traditional metal mesh mask; the foil, without breaking, penetrated the mesh of the mask and luckily missed his head. Mr Or presented his mask, which showed obvious signs of a lack of maintenance as well as some corrosion marks, to the FIE.

These two accidents resulted in the FIE checking the safety measures applied for the metal mesh and transparent visor masks.

Therefore, on 25 February 2008, tests on visors and 1600 Newton FIE masks, transparent visor masks and traditional metal mesh masks, were carried out at the CRITT Institute in France.

These tests confirmed the conclusions of studies carried out previously by the Transparent Visor Mask Commission, SEMI, the homologations and the creation of the EN 13567 Standard.

Notably, that the transparent mask offers the same level of safety as the traditional metal mesh mask if the security rules are adhered to for both types of masks.

The penetrating tests at low and high speeds carried out on the masks with transparent visors and the traditional metal mesh masks confirmed that both masks offer levels of safety that meet the EN13567 Standard and that both types of mask are good from a point of view of safety.

Recommandations:

- Check that the mesh part of the masks (visor and traditional) is in good condition. This can easily be done by placing the metal wire mesh against the light. And regularly check that the mask and its bib are in good condition.

Chemical damage tests were carried out on the masks of several brands and 800 and 1600 Newton cloth. These tests confirmed the following safety recommendations:

- Keep the masks in their bags while transporting them
- For all types of masks (visor or metal mesh), if the bib of the mask is wet, wait until it dries before putting it away in its bag.
- Do not use the masks to carry containers holding liquids or glues, or to carry clothing, gloves or shoes which are wet or damp from perspiration.
- Avoid all contact between the visor and chemical agents, in particular glues, acetones or other liquids that damage plastics and LEXAN.

- In the case of a mask with a transparent visor, change the visor when one of the following four situations occurs first:

- a) Within a maximum of 2 years after the date marked on the visor;
- b) Appearance of grooves or visible deep marks on the surface;
- c) The visor is no longer transparent (opaque);
- d) When the visor has been in contact with chemical agents.

- Always be equipped with a spare visor and the tools needed to replace the visor, ensure that all the screws are in place and that the frames and visor are correctly and adequately fitted.

- Only use Lexan or Makrolan visors bought from the mask's manufacturer or its official representative.

- Clean the visor with a soft cloth and only use neutral liquids such as water.

Following these investigations, the FIE Executive Committee was consulted and it decided to apply the decision taken during the 2007 Congress in Madrid (ESP) , starting from **March 15, 2008** :

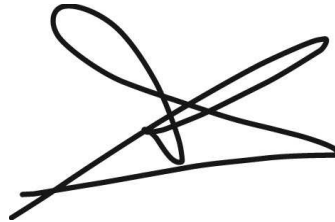
The use of wireless apparatus and masks with transparent visors are compulsory in the following women's and men's foil competitions:

- *Individual events of the Grand Prix competitions, World Championships and Olympic Games, from the table of 32 onwards;*
- *Team events of the team World Cup and of the World Championships, from the top 8 teams;*
- *Team events of the Olympic Games, from the beginning of the competition.*

With regard to épée, the FIE will conduct new investigations.

Sincerely,

René Roch
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.