



08 April 2009

Dear Iaido Members

We have recently gone through a stage of re-clarifying with our insurers the nature and inherent risks involved in our arts. As expected, the mere fact that we train with either unsharpened iaito or sharpened shinken has raised interest with the insurers and stands out on our risk assessment as something which needs careful attention.

In order to satisfy the requirements of the insurance we have had to convince them that we have several processes in place or factors in our support:

- That all dojo operate within the BKA health and safety guidelines and that each has a risk assessment in place.
- That all dojo activities are supervised by a trained and insured BKA coach with a first aider present at all times.
- That our accident record is very good (albeit the reporting of small accidents and near misses is actually quite thin) and that very few significant accidents have occurred.

Further to our submission we have had to provide assurances about safe systems of practice including minimum distances between students when training. This has been difficult to establish as, as you well know, different kata take up different areas but we have concluded that a 9m² area (i.e. 3m x 3m) per exponent be allocated to ensure an acceptable level of risk.

This potential exclusion zone does of course create difficulties in that it would suggest that no person, including a teacher, would be allowed close to an exponent while they were practicing. This not being possible to implement practically we have stated that our coaches are trained to keep a keen eye on distancing and are experienced enough to know when it is safe to approach.

The one remaining and significant risk remains around demonstrating techniques on other people. The exclusion zone principle described above suggests that we are minimising our members' exposure to cuts from other people. This rule is compromised however if people do demonstrations against other people with swords and would present a potential problem with our insurers if an accident were to occur. Slow and controlled movements may appear to be completely safe but they are in fact an accident waiting to happen.

For this reason we would strongly advise our members:

1. That a shinken or iaito is never used in a demonstration against another person where an accidental injury may occur through being in close proximity.
2. That all other demonstrations or practice of technique against other people are carried out with bokuto.
3. That a 9m² area per person is allocated whether in the dojo or at a seminar. Rotational practice or decision and dictation of the forms to be practiced should be implemented if the training area cannot accommodate all present.

With the fact that all of our seminars are extremely well attended and thus are prone to crowding, we especially wish for full implementation of the above from here on.

I thank you for your cooperation.

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