Helmet Removal

Treatment of the injured patient with protective gear presents unique challenges. For preplanned events an emergency action plan that has been discussed prior to the event may provide organized consistent treatment.

1. High Impact Helmets (i.e., motorcycle, car racing)
   A. Whether the helmet is a closed or open-faced style helmet, the helmet must always be removed.
   B. Provide constant spinal precautions.

2. Low Impact Helmets WITH Shoulder Pads (i.e., football, ice hockey, etc.)
   A. In those patients wearing a well-fitted helmet which conforms closely to the patient's head, **unless there is a prearranged agreement between team training/medical staff, EMS providers and the likely receiving facility**, helmet and shoulder pads should be removed as spinal precautions are maintained. Removal of all equipment at the scene provides the best access to the athlete for treatment.
   B. If prearrangement is in place to keep the helmet and shoulder pads in place the procedure would be as follows (or as determined by agreement):
      1. If the patient is awake and able to protect his/her airway, the helmet should be left in place and the patient should have spinal precautions maintained using the helmet to assist with spinal precautions. The face shield must be removed prior to transport.
      2. If the patient has an altered level of consciousness or, for any other reason, is unable to protect his/her airway, the helmet should be left in place and the patient should have spinal precautions maintained using the helmet to assist with spinal precautions. The face shield should be immediately removed to allow access to the airway.
      3. If the face shield cannot easily be removed for any patient, the helmet and shoulder pads should be removed using in-line stabilization.
      4. If the airway cannot be controlled for any reason with the helmet in place, the helmet and shoulder pads should immediately be removed, using in-line stabilization.

3. Low Impact Helmets WITHOUT Shoulder Pads (i.e., baseball, bicycle, rollerblade, etc.):
   A. Whether the helmet is a closed or open-faced style helmet, the helmet must always be removed.
   B. Provide constant spinal precautions.