



**For Immediate Release**

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***Minnesota Hockey Announces Rule Changes  
Penalty for Boarding and Checking-From-Behind Increases***

(ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA – January 22, 2012) -- The Minnesota Hockey Board of Directors voted unanimously at its winter board meeting to strengthen the severity of the penalty issued to players who are cited for boarding and checking-from-behind infractions. These rule changes are being adopted on a pilot basis and will be reevaluated at the conclusion of the 2012 Minnesota Hockey season. Minnesota Hockey will continue to work with the hockey community to evaluate the effectiveness of these changes.

“Player safety is and always will be the highest priority of Minnesota Hockey,” said Dave Margenau, President of Minnesota Hockey. “However, as important as the rule change is, it is equally vital that the culture of hockey change to eliminate the intimidation and illegal hits. Officials must call all illegal play and their calls must be supported by coaches, parents and players.”

Effective Wednesday, January 25, 2012, the penalty for boarding and checking-from-behind will be a minimum five (5) minute major penalty. This will cover all Minnesota Hockey sanctioned games played until July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012; after this time, the changes will be reviewed by the Minnesota Hockey Board of Directors.

Minnesota Hockey will work with its local community associations, coaches, and referees to ensure other existing rules continue to be enforced and that the rule changes will be enforced with zero tolerance. Additionally, Minnesota Hockey will continue to provide ongoing education regarding proper hockey techniques, rules and regulations.

“Referees for the youth games take their role of ensuring safe and fair play seriously,” said Eric Olson, Minnesota Hockey Referee in Chief. “These rule changes will be called with zero tolerance.”

As the governing body of youth and amateur hockey in the state, Minnesota Hockey has been a national leader in creating safety initiatives for youth hockey. In 2004 Minnesota Hockey, in collaboration with the Mayo Clinic Sports Medicine Center, introduced the Hockey Education Program (HEP). The objective of HEP is to provide a safe and positive hockey experience by teaching hockey skills, educating parents and coaches and creating accountability through Fair Play. Fair Play is a program that awards teams who play within the rules and respect their opponents with a league standings Fair Play point for each game, win or lose.

Minnesota Hockey coaches have and will continue to teach skills and techniques to ensure as safe of a playing environment as possible. Through the mandatory USA Hockey Coaching Education Program, clinics and materials provided by Minnesota Hockey, coaches are provided the training to accomplish the goal of player development. Included in the training is a progressive approach to teaching body contact and checking. More information about these programs is available at [www.usahockey.com](http://www.usahockey.com). and [www.minnesotahockey.org](http://www.minnesotahockey.org)

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Minnesota Hockey, an affiliate of USA Hockey, is the governing body of youth and amateur hockey in Minnesota and the premier developer of hockey players in the state. With over 66,000 registered players and coaches, it is the largest state governing body for amateur hockey in the United States.