

Sports Facility & Field Inspection Checklist

Section I: Facility and Field Risk Management

Risk Management helps organizations:

- » Identify the sources of potential loss or damage
- » Evaluate different ways to minimize the loss or damage, and
- » Implement a plan of action to reduce the possibility of loss or damage in the future

Inspecting all facilities and fields used by your team or league is an important component of the risk management process. The condition of the facility or field contributes heavily to the overall safety of your participants. Therefore, ensuring the safe condition of the facilities and fields used by your teams should be a priority in your risk management program.

Before signing a rental agreement or lease, perform a visual inspection of all aspects of the facility or field complex. Use the following checklists to note any safety concerns you may have and make sure they are satisfactorily addressed before you sign the rental agreement. It is equally important to understand the terms of your contract or lease agreement, so that you know what you areas fall under your responsibility. Separate checklists are included for Facility Inspections, Field Inspections, Parking Inspections and Contract Evaluation.

Note: These guidelines are not legal advice nor are they intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with emergency or safety procedures, in preventing crisis situations in your sports program, or in complying with any safety-related regulations or other laws.

Section II: Facility Inspection and Safety Guidelines

Once you have made your inspection, resolve any inadequate areas or safety concerns with the facility owner before you sign the lease.

- » Location, accessibility and visibility of entrances and exits
- » Verify that floors, walkways, stairs and other surfaces are in good condition
- » Safety, construction and positioning of seating, bleachers and spectator areas
- » Condition of and access to locker rooms, restrooms and portable toilets (port-o-johns)
- » Condition, location and lighting of parking lots, including passenger pick-up/drop-off areas (see Section IV - Parking Lot Inspections for more information)
- » Handicap access - check entryways and exits; ramps, elevators and lifts; restroom access; parking
- » Concession stands - evaluate condition/quality of cooking, refrigeration and serving equipment

- » Security of ticket booth and concession stands, if cash transactions are being accepted
- » Lighting, electrical systems, heating and cooling systems; check emergency power source
- » Check fencing, barriers and perimeter areas
- » If playing or practicing indoors, ensure that sprinkler heads in gymnasium are caged or protected from errant balls
- » Poisons/Toxins: Inspect facility for toxic materials such as use of lead paint or toxic wood preservatives; ensure that hazardous materials, such as gasoline, cleaning agents, etc., are properly stored and locked up; and restrict use of fields immediately after applications of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizer.
- » Locate the nearest land-line telephone to the field and note its phone number
- » Field Inspection Checklist
- » Medical facility on site
- » Security station on site
- » Communications station on site
- » Designated lost & found area
- » General housekeeping and cleanliness

Section III: Field Inspections and Safety Guidelines

A thorough inspection of the field, bleachers, outer buildings and restrooms should be done before the season begins. The field itself should be inspected by a coach or official prior to the start of every practice or game.

- » The dimensions of the field should conform with the specifications established for your sport, which may vary based on level of play
 - » The entire playing field should be free of any holes, depressions, raised sprinkler heads and other hazards
 - » Clear the field of stones, pieces of glass and other objects or debris
 - » Spectators & seating: Check safety, construction and positioning of seating, bleachers and spectator areas. Make sure spectator areas are a safe distance from the field of play. Do not allow spectators to be on the playing field or to stand on the sidelines.
 - » Light stanchions, fence posts and trees that are near the field of play should be properly cushioned or protected, and always be designated as "out of play" areas. All "out of play" areas should be cushioned or fenced off or, at minimum, marked by paint or chalk lines.
 - » Inspect the condition of and access to locker rooms, restrooms and portable toilets (port-o-johns). If portable toilets are used, make sure they are positioned on level ground, away from inclines or depressions which may cause them to tip over.
 - » Check condition, location and lighting of parking lots, including passenger pick-up/drop-off areas (see Section IV - Parking Lot Inspections for more information)
 - » Handicap access - check entryways and exits; ramps; restroom access; parking
 - » Concession stands - evaluate condition/quality of cooking, refrigeration and serving equipment
 - » Check Security of ticket booth and concession stands, if cash transactions are being accepted
 - » Inspect all fencing to make sure it is in good repair and free of protruding hazards or sharp edges
 - » If the field is used for other sports, inspect for fixtures or equipment that may have been left by the previous user.
Important Note: If the field is used for soccer and portable goals are on the premises, NEVER allow players or others to play on, hang from or move the goalposts. Portable soccer goals are prone to tipping over, and have been responsible for catastrophic injuries and fatalities in recent years.
- » Find out if the facility is equipped with lightning detection equipment. Determine where the nearest shelter is from the field in the event of serious weather or other emergency conditions. Note that small, open shelters typically found on playing fields or parks will not provide adequate protection in the event of lightning. A house or substantial building offers the best protection from lightning strikes.
 - » Poisons/Toxins: Inspect facility for toxic materials such as use of lead paint or toxic wood preservatives; ensure that hazardous materials, such as gasoline, cleaning agents, etc., are properly stored and locked up; restrict use of fields immediately after applications of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizer; and eliminate plant materials like poison ivy, and poison oak from fields and walkways, which could be harmful to people and pets.
 - » Locate the nearest land-line telephone to the field and note its phone number
 - » Locate the nearest medical facility, whether on-site or off-site
 - » Check whether there is a security station on-site

Section IV: Parking Lot Inspections and Safety Guidelines

The parking lot is an area often overlooked in the risk management process. Whether or not your team is contractually liable for the parking area in your lease agreement, you can still be held liable for injuries or damages that occur in this area during your team's activities.

- » Post a sign stating that attendees are parking at their own risk and that your team/league is not responsible for any damage to or theft from vehicles parked during your activities.
- » Make sure parking area is far enough away from the field of play to minimize the potential for damage to vehicles.
- » Establish a Player Loading Zone by placing temporary signs during practices and games to indicate where cars should stop to load and unload passengers. This will help eliminate confusion for drivers and passengers. It will create a zone where motorists will expect to see pedestrians and therefore, they will know to slow down. To assist you in setting up a loading zone that is equipped to safely handle large numbers of people, contact your local police or sheriff's department for guidance.
- » Go Slow Zone - In addition to the Player Loading Zone, help alert motorists to the fact that children are present by putting up temporary signs in the parking lot that say "Children at Play" or "Slow: Children". Work with your local city council, safety board or parks commission to put in speed bumps or road signs to assist in slowing traffic.
- » Make sure parking lot is clear of potholes, debris and other dangerous conditions. Report such problems immediately to the facility owner (or take care of them immediately if you are responsible for maintaining the parking lot under the terms of your contract).
- » Ensure that access to the parking lot and access to the field is not blocked by haphazard parking. Emergency vehicles must have quick, easy access to the facility or playing field in the event of an emergency.
- » For activities that are held at night (or until dusk), verify that the parking areas are well-lit. Proper lighting ensures that pedestrians and bicyclists can be spotted easily and from a distance by motorists. A properly lighted parking area also increases the personal security of those using the facility, and provides better protection for the vehicles.

These Parking Lot Safety guidelines are based on those developed and used by the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO).

Section V: Evaluating the Terms of the Facility/Field Contract

It is important for you as the team or league administrator to evaluate the terms of the rental agreement or lease contracts that you may sign in order to secure playing facilities for your activities. They can range from simple, verbal agreements to complex legal contracts. In order to understand the exposure to you and your organization, you need to know what your responsibilities are under the terms of that agreement.

To determine what areas of the facility fall within your responsibility, check the following:

Are you responsible for the field or facility only during the time that your players are on the field? Or are you responsible for the field/facility on a 24-hour basis for the term of the lease? Or does your responsibility fall something between the two? If so, how is it defined in the contract?

- » Are you responsible for providing insurance on the field/facility, or is it provided by the owner? Do they require that you add the field/facility owner as an additional insured to the US Lacrosse liability policy?
- » Are you required to provide insurance coverage for the facility on a 24-hour basis? If so, you may need to purchase additional insurance to cover that exposure. Contact your insurance administrator.
- » Who is responsible for the field equipment -- scoreboards, bleachers, benches, goals, etc.?
- » Under the agreement, what specific areas of the facility fall under your responsibility? Is it just the field or gym? Or are you responsible for the parking lot, pathways to the facility, restrooms, locker room areas, adjoining fields, etc.? If you are responsible for additional areas, make sure to include them in your inspection process. Also, be sure to supervise those areas, as you may be responsible for any incidents that occur there, whether or not they are directly related to your activities.
- » Who is responsible for the general condition, maintenance, repair and housekeeping of the facilities used? Who is responsible for field maintenance (lawn-care, applying fertilizer/pesticides and watering)?
- » Is there a Hold Harmless agreement in the contract? If so, that means that the facility owner is not responsible (you are 'holding them harmless') for any incidents, damages or injuries that may occur at the facility during the term of your lease. Note: when you sign a hold harmless agreement, you are accepting full responsibility for incidents that may be beyond the scope of your insurance plan.

By understanding what your responsibilities are under the contracts you sign with the field or facility owner, you will be better able to manage the risks associated with your activities and understand who is responsible for specific duties and care.