

# Bollinger Sports Safety Bulletin

February 2007



## Sports Field/Facility Inspection Guidelines

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### General Risk Management for Fields and Facilities

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.

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 areas fall under your responsibility. Separate checklists are included for Facility Inspections, Field Inspections, Parking Inspections and Contract Evaluation.

### Field & Facility Inspections and Safety Guidelines

A thorough inspection of the field, bleachers, 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.

1. The dimensions of the field should conform to established specifications of your sport based on level of play.
2. The entire playing field should be free of any holes, depressions, raised sprinkler heads and other debris or hazards.
3. Check location, accessibility and visibility of entrances and exits.
4. Verify that walkways, stairs and other surfaces are in good condition; check same for any interior spaces and flooring.
5. 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.
6. Light stanchions, fence posts and trees 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.
7. Inspect the condition of and access to locker rooms, restrooms and portable toilets.
8. Check condition, location and lighting of parking lots, including passenger pick-up/drop-off areas.
9. Handicap access – Ensure that entryways, exits, restrooms and parking areas are handicap accessible and free from obstruction.
10. Concession stands - evaluate condition/quality of cooking, refrigeration and serving equipment
11. Evaluate security of ticket booth and concession stands, if cash transactions are being accepted
12. Inspect all fencing to make sure it is in good repair and free of protruding hazards or sharp edges
13. If the field is used for other sports, inspect for fixtures or equipment that may have been left by the previous user.
14. IMPORTANT NOTE regarding SOCCER GOALS: If 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. Ask the maintenance crew to move goal posts in or out of position as needed. If not available, have **adults** move goal posts. Once in position, make sure that goal posts are properly anchored, or chained together when out of use.

15. Does the facility have 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.
16. Poisons/Toxins: Inspect facility for toxic materials such as gasoline, cleaning agents, etc., and ensure that they are properly stored and locked up; restrict use of fields immediately after applications of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizer.
17. Locate the nearest landline telephone to the field and note its phone number.
18. Locate the nearest medical facility and security station, whether on-site or off-site.

### 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.

1. Post signs stating that attendees park at their own risk and that your team/league is not responsible for any damage to or theft from vehicles parked during your activities.
2. Make sure parking area is far enough away from the field of play to minimize the potential for damage to vehicles from errant balls and other equipment.
3. Check that parking lot is clear of potholes, debris and other dangerous conditions. Report such problems immediately to the facility owner (or handle them yourself if you are responsible for maintaining the parking lot under the terms of your contract).
4. Ensure that access to the parking lot and 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.
5. If chains are used to block off parking areas or driveways, make sure they are clearly marked by cones or flags to prevent pedestrian or vehicle accidents.
6. 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.

By reviewing the safety of the properties your teams use, you can greatly minimize the potential for injury to players and spectators, as well as property damage to those in the vicinity.

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*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.*