

Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

Preparing for Athletic Sports Seasons By Kyle Stewart

When one thinks of injuries associated with athletics, the first thing that comes to mind is an injury sustained by a student athlete. However, each year district staff members, including coaches and buildings/grounds employees, are injured in the course of preparing for the upcoming athletic seasons. These injuries may include strain injuries sustained while moving specific equipment for a sport and/or preparing the athletic field-of-play areas. Although it is impossible to completely remove the risk of incurring a work-related injury while performing these associated tasks, we can employ industry best practices to mitigate the risk. One of the greatest challenges with the moving and setup of athletic equipment is the awkward size, shape and weight of the equipment. Therefore, it may be beneficial to review related internal protocols with all applicable staff members in an effort to reduce the likelihood of a staff member incurring a preventable injury. Equipment from each athletic sport presents its own unique challenges, so consider the points outlined below to determine if they are applicable to your own internal protocols and institute additional preventative measures if they apply.

Wrestling Mats

- Refrain from transporting wrestling mats from one building to another; purchase additional wrestling mats to be housed at each facility based on need.
- To reduce the risk of injury while moving/transporting wrestling mats, consider using assist equipment specifically designed to transport and store them.
- Incorporate a protocol for conducting tasks requiring the transport of wrestling mats. All applicable staff members should be trained on the protocol, which that may include requiring multiple staff members to assist with the transport of wrestling mats or the use of a mobile wrestling mat transport/storage rack with wheels to facilitate transport.

Track & Field Equipment

- If high jump and pole vault mats are required to be moved, use a mat cart specifically designed to transport the mats, due to the weight and size.
- Hurdles should be transported from the storage location to the destination on the track using a hurdle transport cart equipped with wheels.
- Consider utilizing long jump/triple jump pit covers constructed of a lightweight material such as vinyl instead of rubber to reduce the risk of strain injuries.

Goals

- If staff members are required to move goals, the goals should be equipped with wheels to reduce the risk of a strain injury.
- If moveable goals are used, it is imperative that the goals be properly anchored/counterweighted to reduce the likelihood of tipping over.
- Goals should be secured to the ground, preferable at the rear of the goal. Ensure that the anchors are clearly visible and flush with the ground surface.

Baseball/Softball Diamond

- Survey and inspect all bases and anchoring components for defects and signs of distress in any of the materials, which may warrant replacement or repair.
- Inspect all components of the diamond's fencing system for holes, broken wire links, bent tubular support poles and padding system.
- Inspect the safety netting around batting cages and fields for signs of wear, which may warrant repair and/or replacement.
- Visually inspect the bleachers and guardrail systems for signs of defects and areas in need of maintenance.

Special Events Set-up (bleachers, tables, chairs, etc.)

- If a special event requires chair/table setup or telescopic bleachers to be pulled out, ensure that ample staff members are present to assist.
- When possible, use equipment designed specifically for safely transporting the load (i.e., folding/stacking chair movers, bleacher movers, carts capable of moving portable tables, etc.).
- Use industry best practices, such as a two-person method, for moving awkward and/or heavy items; never attempt to set up and move a folding table alone.
- Perform preventative maintenance on tables difficult to erect or telescopic bleachers that do not glide freely to reduce the exertion required to move them and minimize the potential for incurring a strain injury.

For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or sorr@cmregent.com.