multi-line
Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust

Key to Safe Gym Operations: Inspections & Monitoring

When everything in a facility is in good working order and operating smoothly, it's all too easy for staff members to become complacent, trusting that everything will stay that way. At least until something goes wrong. When dealing with the equipment in a gymnasium, particularly large, overhead components like basketball goals or gym dividers, when things go wrong, they can go very, very wrong.

Athletic Directors, Coaches, Maintenance Personnel and gym users need to be aware. If you find a bolt and/or a nut on the gym floor don't dismiss it, it could be the sign of a major accident waiting to happen. Report it immediately to the Director of Building & Grounds as they will need to investigate.

TRAINED EYES

While school employees should always have their eyes open to spot potential problems, most manufacturers recommend an in-depth inspection be conducted on a yearly basis. It is important to document what you find. It helps from a risk control standpoint, if something were to happen and you had good documentation it would be very helpful in mitigating risk.

Such a close inspection can be done either internally or externally, depending on the resources a facility has at its disposal. If a facility operator has knowledgeable staff, they could do inspections internally. If this is not an option for the school there are plenty of service providers out there who are regional installers and service people who come in on a fee basis and do a full gym inspection.

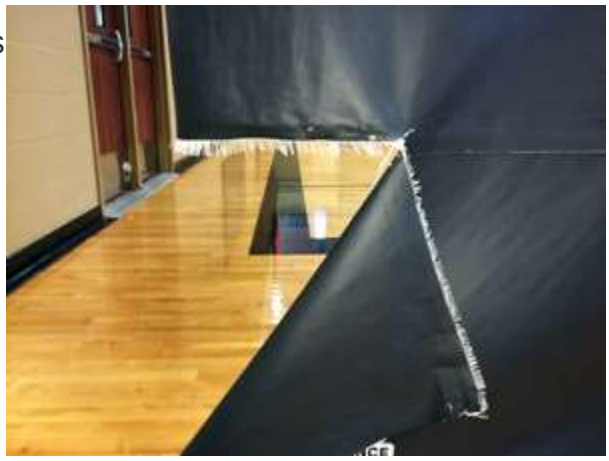
HEADS UP

Whether an annual inspection is done in-house or by an external professional, casual visual inspections can and should be conducted on a regular basis by facility employees. Though special training or certification shouldn't be necessary, staff members do need to know what to be looking for. The place to start is with all overhead components.

This would be wall-mounted basketball systems or ceiling-mounted systems. Some gyms have wrestling mats stored in the ceilings, divider curtains, batting cages. A high priority is to look at those overhead mounted items, anything that can fall onto the playing surface or into the bleachers.

Most manufactures offer some type of backup safety device to prevent serious damage in the event of a failure. VSBIT strongly recommends installation of a safety device. They are not required and thus not always purchased, but it's never too late to go back and add them (go to vsbit.org to find out information on our safety grants). Cables can stretch over time. If there's too much slack in the cable, you go to retract and it may not retract properly. It may bind, wrap around and damage

equipment. Pay attention to the noise the equipment makes as its being raised or lowered into place. If it makes any strange or odd noises, it could be a sign of a problem. Be aware. Don't just look, listen to the equipment on a regular basis.



The hardware of other ceiling-hung components, such as divider curtains or batting cages, should also be checked, as well as the netting and fabric that makes up each. There could be some rips that would allow a ball to pass through, which could injure a bystander. If there's a small rip in a vinyl curtain, a simple patch can eliminate future damage, but a small tear in the vinyl can become larger over time, which could lead to replacing the entire curtain.

While it's crucial to give all of these overhead components a thorough yearly inspection, schools shouldn't consider the job done once the paperwork is filed. Just because you inspect once a year does not guarantee that something isn't going to happen in the months between inspections. Take seriously the fact that you do have big heavy equipment hanging from the ceiling. If you see something that could be a concern, instead of ignoring it and saying you'll get it next year, be vigilant.

EAR TO THE GROUND

Though the overhead components of a gymnasium may prevent the most visible risk, equipment used on the gym floor for sports should not be forgotten. The safety padding used throughout the gym on walls or backboards, make sure it's attached and not hanging loose, and that it's in serviceable condition to protect players. Wall padding is in good shape 25 years after it's been put in as long as it's securely anchored and hasn't torn.

Another item that's often overlooked when it comes to gym safety, isn't a particular gym equipment component, but rather signage spelling out what is and isn't allowed within the space. There is value in having rules regarding the facility and having them clearly published, partially to provide real safety and partially to cover risk management. Schools can point to things like that they've done to reduce the chances of injury.

FORM AND FUNCTION

Thorough yearly inspections coupled with keen eyes can minimize the likelihood of equipment failure and injuries to users, but they also contribute to the overall gym experience. The two main reasons to inspect equipment:

1. Safety
2. Functionality

Out-of-order equipment means a lost opportunity for use, not to mention contributes to a negative experience for the user.

Even equipment that appears to be in good working order might not be performing at its best. Rotate your equipment, breakaway basketball rims for example: from high-use areas to lower-use areas. While breakaway rims typically have a warranty, they also have a lifecycle during which they work the best. Depending on the level of play, most facilities consider replacing their breakaway rims on a 2- to 5-year cycle, or they rotate their main court rims to one of their side courts. It's also easier on the facility's budget to replace such big-ticket items gradually, rather than all at once. In the end, diligence about equipment inspections and maintenance contributes to a lower bottom line overall.

INDOOR SPORTS EQUIPMENT CONDITION CHECK LIST

EQUIPMENT TYPE:	NEW	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
EQUIPMENT TYPE: BASKETBALL				
BASKETBALL: BACKBOARDS - GLASS				
Clarity of Glass	4	3	2	1
Condition of Frame	4	3	2	1
Condition of Front Plate	4	3	2	1
Condition of Glass	4	3	2	1
Condition of Mounting Brackets	4	3	2	1
Equipment Recommendation:	Calculated PLAY RX™ Average: _____ If Average under 3, replacement recommended			
BASKETBALL: BACKBOARDS - INDOOR NON-GLASS				
Clarity of Backboard	4	3	2	1
Condition of Border & Target	4	3	2	1
Condition of Mounting Brackets	4	3	2	1
Condition of Powder-Coat Finish (I.E. Chips, Presence of Rust, Scratches)	4	3	2	1
Deformation of Backboard (I.E. Bowing, Breaking around rim plate)	4	3	2	1
Equipment Recommendation:	Calculated PLAY RX™ Average: _____ If Average under 3, replacement recommended			
BASKETBALL: BACKBOARD PADDING				
Center-Mount Sagging	4	3	2	1
Color Vibrance	4	3	2	1
Condition of Pad Corner	4	3	2	1
Density	4	3	2	1
Pad Smoothness	4	3	2	1
Equipment Recommendation:	Calculated PLAY RX™ Average: _____ If Average under 3, replacement recommended			

EQUIPMENT TYPE:	NEW	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
BASKETBALL: GOALS - BREAKAWAY RIMS				
Condition of Net	4	3	2	1
Condition of Net Attachment	4	3	2	1
Condition of Powder-Coat Finish (I.E. Chips, Presence of Rust, Scratches)	4	3	2	1
Condition of Welds	4	3	2	1
Deflect & Return (I.E. 90 degree to 12 degree to 90 degree)	4	3	2	1
Reboundability (I.E. Distance the ball travels off rebound; further is worse)	4	3	2	1
Equipment Recommendation:	Calculated PLAY RX™ Average: _____ If Average under 3, replacement recommended			
BASKETBALL: GOALS - FIXED RIMS				
Condition of Net	4	3	2	1
Condition of Net Attachment	4	3	2	1
Condition of Powder-Coat Finish (I.E. Chips, Presence of Rust, Scratches)	4	3	2	1
Condition of Welds	4	3	2	1
Tabletop Level of Rim (I.E. 90 degree)	4	3	2	1
Equipment Recommendation:	Calculated PLAY RX™ Average: _____ If Average under 3, replacement recommended			

CALCULATION EXAMPLE FOR BACKBOARDS - PLAYGROUND/OUTDOOR

FACTOR VALUES ADDED/ # OF FACTORS = PLAY RX™ AVERAGE

4 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 2 (FACTOR VALUES ADDED)/ = 13
13/5 (NUMBER OF FACTORS) = 2.6
2.6 < 3 = REPLACEMENT RECOMMENDED