

Soccer Goal Safety

For school districts, controlling soccer goal hazards is difficult. Some districts have both formal arrangements with local leagues (often the leagues actually own the posts) for use of the soccer fields on nights and weekends. In addition, some schools are a place for the locals to kick a ball around at any time. Realistically, no matter how good an effort a district makes to establish procedures regarding storing, chaining, assembling, staking, etc., a moveable soccer goal can get put up and down up to fifteen times a week by fifteen different groups of parent/player goalpost “volunteers” and enforcing the rules is difficult.

The stability of standing goals can be and is assessed during inspections, but most often the goals are chained or lying down, and the recent tragedy reminds us all that the real danger is present as the posts are being lifted up from the ground. One can raise the posts (which CPSC states can range from 150-500 pounds) up to vertical using hand over hand to a certain height, but, larger goals have to be ‘thrown’ up the last foot or two and trust it makes it to the upright before falling back down.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Conduct an immediate review of the current procedures for raising and lowering the goals.

1. If students have been allowed to raise the goal unsupervised, discontinue that practice immediately.
2. Define clearly the level of supervision required during every raising and lowering of the posts for student use and define specifically who can approve moving ahead with the procedure each time.
3. Train supervisors, coaches and PE Teachers on the safe way to raise a goal; ideally the manufacturer’s handbook has the information specific to their model, but, failing that, use the common sense rules:
 - If the weight is clearly too much or too awkward for those present to handle without a struggle, wait for reinforcements.
 - Lift from outside the plane of the posts.
 - At the final throw, lift only from the side and have those in the front and back step back from the falling zone of the crossbar and back brace.
 - Insist that those not involved in the actual lift remain several feet outside the possible falling zone.
4. Remind the students that any horseplay such as swinging on the goals is forbidden at any time but will lead to severe discipline if conducted during the lifting or lowering process (enforce that rule consistently).
5. Establish that only manufactured posts are to be placed on the fields. Homemade efforts, no matter how well intentioned, cannot ensure the needed stability and safety.

Review the existing procedures – including those established with local leagues – for the storing, chaining, installing, staking of the goals and assess the procedures for real-world achievability and functionality.

1. Chain the goals during all non-use times is a good idea.
2. Stake the back bar and padding the goalposts
3. Ensure safety labels are clearly visible

Conduct a district-wide overview of the soccer goal issue and develop a long-term Risk Management plan for improving the safety of the goals pending available funding.

As with the playground regulations, districts are well served by being able to demonstrate their intent – formalized in a prioritized plan – to upgrade the equipment as soon as funding is available.

Web link to CPSC: <http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/Soccer.pdf>