

# ATHLETIC EQUIPMENT *Padding*



## Reality Alert

In the summer of 2006, several young men met at a local sports facility for a competitive pick-up basketball game. A 19-year-old stole a pass at mid-court and rushed toward the basket for an easy lay-up. As he jumped, he made contact with a defender in mid-air. The young man was unintentionally forced to the ground and ultimately collided head-first with an unpadded gym wall.

He was knocked unconscious, but eventually came to. He was taken to the hospital because of lingering head and shoulder pain. Six days later, the young man died from complications caused by a skull fracture and brain contusions.

A neurosurgeon familiar with the accident stated that had the wall been padded, the impact experienced would have been less than 25 percent of the force experienced in the collision with an unpadded wall. Simple padding would have prevented the concussion, skull fracture, brain contusions, and ultimately death. After this incident, the gym installed athletic pads on both ends of the basketball court. The total cost to do this was less than \$1,000.

## Loss Prevention Strategies

While true, this story is an extreme example of what can happen when athletic equipment padding is non-existent or poorly maintained. A variety of other injuries, however, can occur when padding is not used effectively.

These actions should be taken to ensure serious accidents do not occur at your YMCA:

- Secure all obstructions within 20 feet of playing surfaces. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Basketball hoop supports;
  - Volleyball nets;
  - Bleachers and benches;
  - Scoreboards;
  - Football goal posts;
- Emphasize safe levels of physical contact between members.
- Ensure that all new members are comfortable with your facility. Point out any areas that may present opportunities for injury such as large steps.
- Use bright paint or signs to highlight obstacles in your facility.

## Employee Training Exercise

Please use the attached worksheet to engage your employees in a discussion of the importance of safeguarding your facility. Ask each employee to fill out the worksheet as completely as possible and then share their information with the others. Brainstorm all of the opportunities available and identify actions that must be taken immediately. The story on this page can be a great introduction and significantly illustrate the importance of this issue.

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All YMCAs are unique. Some have skateboard parks or archery ranges, while others have racquetball courts or climbing walls. List all of the different facilities available at your YMCA. Then list as many obstacles in each of these facilities you believe may present an opportunity for injury.

	Facility	Obstacles
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

When complete, share your list with your co-workers and discuss opportunities for improvement. Considerations may include rearranging fixtures, hanging warning signs, or installing cushioned pads. You may also mention current safety fixtures you believe are inadequate or have been poorly maintained.

