

Ice Arenas: Safe Practices and Procedures

PRIMEX³ RISK MANAGEMENT BULLETIN

Your Guide to Safe Participation

Reasonable prudent actions, including a proper facility-wide safety program can reduce venue liability exposures while making the work environment safer for spectators, participants and employees.

Employee Safety

Employee Safety may seem to be less of a concern in an ice arena than that of liability exposures. However, employee safety must be considered. Hazards range from chemicals and right-to-know, to potential exposure to bloodborne pathogens. Some employees may also be exposed to specific injuries due to their operation of ice resurfacing equipment. Another obvious consideration is that of slips and falls, a leading cause of occupational injuries in any workplace. Employees must receive proper training with regard to the hazards, and appropriate policies must be developed and enforced to ensure employee safety.

Spectator Safety

Providing a safe environment for spectators is essential. There are many areas of concern, but perhaps the most obvious is an errant puck.

Errant Pucks

Errant pucks are a very real possibility that could cause injury to spectators, so appropriate spectator shielding must be provided. The **ASTM Standard Guide for Ice Hockey Playing Facilities (F1703-04)** clearly outlines that spectator shielding be shatter-resistant clear tempered glass or acrylic extending a minimum of six (6) feet above the dasher panels at rink ends and a minimum of four (4) feet above the dasher panels along the sides, except for player and penalty benches where it is only to be placed alongside and behind the benches. Off-ice officials and/or time keeper benches shall also be afforded protection.

In addition, safety nets shall be installed at the ends and sides of the arena above the glass to afford additional protection. The nets can be black or white and must be force resistant, reinforced knotless nylon netting or clear monofilament. The nets are to be attached to the glass supports and extend upward to the top of the arena.

Placement of spectator shielding will create corners at player and penalty benches, and corner pads shall be supplied and installed in these areas.



EMPLOYEE SAFETY

- Right-to-Know (Chemicals)
- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Mechanical Equipment
- Slips and Falls

Installation of appropriate spectator shielding is a good first step; however, more must be done to deal with errant pucks:

- Conduct routine, scheduled surveys of spectator shielding devices (glass and nets). These surveys are a basis for ensuring there are no holes, gaps or deficiencies in the system which would allow for a puck to go through the net or for the glass to break. These surveys should be documented and kept on file.
- In conjunction with shielding, signs could be posted in spectator areas that read "Beware of Flying Pucks". Similar warnings could also be printed on tickets and announced at periodic intervals over the arena's public address system.
- Keeping spectators in designated areas. Here again, signs can be posted that read "Authorized Personnel Only" or "No Spectators Beyond This Point – Team Personnel Only". Such areas would include maintenance areas, elevated platforms, players' benches and locker rooms and related corridors.



Spectator Shielding at rink ends shall be six (6) feet above dasher panels and a minimum of four (4) feet above the dasher panels along rink sides.

Participant Safety

Another obvious concern is that of participant safety. While organized leagues have many rules and governances, some groups renting the facility may not have rules to provide for the safety of their participants. As such, the municipality should ensure that, at a minimum, all players be required to wear helmets while playing hockey. Some arenas have gone so far as requiring face masks, which is also something to consider.

Leagues should be required to sign a Facilities Use Agreement prior to play. The agreement should outline that league players are required to follow the arena rules and regulations. As part of the agreement, the league should provide the municipality with evidence of insurance, with the municipality named as an Additional Insured.

Here are a few more risk management considerations so that the arena is safely enjoyed by all users and employees:

- Ensure that “goal pins” are of the breakaway type that pop out, should a skater crash into the net.
- Refrigeration systems and ice re-surfacing machines may present special hazards.
- Install detection systems for other site-specific products if they are present, such as flammable gas, ammonia, carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide.
- Ensure that lighting is adequate, both inside and outside the facility.
- Verify that all fire and life safety equipment is inspected and working properly. This would include alarms, egress doors and emergency lighting and fire extinguisher. These reports should be documented and kept on file.
- Any and all deficiencies noted should be corrected as soon as possible.
- Increase fresh air supply by utilizing mechanical ventilation which may prevent stagnation and build up of toxic gases.

Where to Get More Information

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) publishes the **Standard Guide for Ice Hockey Playing Facilities**, a must-have for any arena, particularly if the arena is planning or undergoing upgrades, or if a municipality is considering the construction of a new or additional facility.

The guide can be obtained through the ANSI Store at www.astm.org or by calling (610) 832-9585.

For more information, please contact your Primex³ Risk Management Consultant at 800-698-2364 or email RiskManagement@nhprimex.org.