

# LESSONS LEARNED

## Bleacher Safety

### Don't Fall Victim in the Stands

To prevent similar incidents, ASCIP recommends that members adhere to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines titled "Guidelines for Retrofitting Bleachers." The document may be downloaded from the CPSC website at <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/330.pdf>.

#### Guidelines for Bleacher Safety

CPSC guidelines include recommendations for guardrails, openings, maintenance, and inspection to prevent people from falling off of bleachers. Guardrails should be designed so as not to encourage young children to attempt to climb over them. Openings in guardrails should prevent passage of a four-inch sphere. CPSC provides recommendations on guardrail specifications including design, heights, space between pickets, openings, and handrails.

The CPSC recommendations also aim **to prevent people from falling through bleachers**. In this area, the recommendations address the open deck design of older bleachers. CPSC recommends the addition of risers in the spaces below the seat boards and above the footboards. The riser should close off enough of the opening in the deck to prevent the passage of a four-inch sphere.

The recommendations also address how **to prevent slips, falls, and injuries while walking on bleachers**. Falls are more likely to occur when there are missing or inadequate bleacher components that assist in access and egress, such as aisles, handrails, and non-skid surfaces.

#### Inspecting Your Bleachers

CPSC and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommend that bleachers be thoroughly inspected at least quarterly by trained personnel, and that any problems be corrected immediately. They also suggest that a licensed design professional inspect bleachers at least every two years and provide written certification that the bleachers are fit for use. Inspection, maintenance, and incident reports must be retained. ASCIP can assist members to inspect bleachers at no cost.

#### Repair, Replace, or Eliminate?

Once adequate inspections are performed and proper evaluations documented, there comes a time when a decision needs be made whether to repair, replace or possibly eliminate inadequate bleachers. It is important to weigh the cost of repair or replacement versus the potentially catastrophic cost of a bleacher-related incident. Also, when deciding, remember that bleachers must also meet DSA and ADA requirements.

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#### The Lawsuit:

An ASCIP member was presented with a claim by a two-year-old who was injured when she fell 15 feet from the top of the bleachers during a sporting event at a District high school.

#### The Allegations:

The claim alleges that the minor was subject to a dangerous condition on public property.

#### The Award

The case settled for \$75,000.

Contact your ASCIP Risk Services Consultant for more information at (562) 404-8029

*Learn all you can from the mistakes of others. You won't have time to make them all yourself. ~Alfred Sheinwold*