

WEIGHT ROOM SAFETY GUIDELINES

Weight rooms are one of the areas with very high potential for liability exposure. In trying to provide a quality and safe program for students while simultaneously reducing the school district's liability exposure, school districts need to focus on four areas: equipment, maintenance, instruction and supervision. The following safety guidelines are designed to assist school districts with providing a quality program with minimal liability exposure.

Equipment:

1. All stationary equipment must be installed to manufacturer's specifications. If no specifications are given, care must be taken to secure the apparatus so the equipment won't tip over during use.
2. Equipment must be located allowing users ample space for lifting and providing spotters ample room for spotting.
3. All free weights should be held in place on the bar with clamps. Free weights being used without clamps are a source of injury to the lifter and to those around the lifter when the bar "unloads" all or part of the weights.
4. If a piece of equipment malfunctions or is broken, remove the piece of equipment from service until repaired.
5. Lifters must wear appropriate shoes while lifting. Loose fitting shoes are not appropriate nor are sandals, flip flops, open-toed shoes or shoes with high or modified high heels. Use proper fitting shoes with good arch, foot and ankle support.
6. Lifters should use weight belts as directed by the instructor.

Maintenance:

1. All equipment must be inspected on a regular basis for broken or malfunctioning parts. Cables, clamps, pulleys, bearings, weight plates, channels, swivels, hangers, bars and benches should be included in the regular inspection. Keep written records of broken equipment and repair records.
2. Any broken fabric on the apparatus should be sealed immediately to stop the contamination of the foam and padding from sweat and body fluids. Use non-porous tape, like wrestling mat tape, as a temporary seal until permanent repairs are made. When permanent repairs are made, if the foam or padding is contaminated, replace the material before recovering the bench or apparatus.
3. All moving joints must be lubricated on a regular basis and according to manufacturer's specifications.
4. Clean and disinfect all fabric on a regular basis.
5. On a quarterly basis, all bolted frames should be inspected and retightened, if necessary. If a bolted frame is moved, check all joints for stability before allowing the apparatus to be used.
6. To prevent undue damage to free weights and floor, it is recommended to cover the floor with absorption mats.

Instruction:

1. Provide students with a written instruction sheet for each lift. Visual reminders, such as wall charts, help reinforce proper lifting techniques.
2. Lifters should be taught the purpose of each lift.
3. Lifters should be instructed when to use spotters, and spotters must be trained to perform their duties correctly. Spotters must be strong enough to provide lifters a safe "spot".
4. Weight training should be progressive in nature and designed to help each lifter progress from their current lifting ability to a definitive goal. Certified progressive weight training programs are available from many commercial sources as well as from colleges and other training institutions. If the instructor does not have a background in progressive weight training, schools should provide this training or provide additional personnel who are trained to assist the instructor.
5. Instructor must stop any incorrect lifting technique and make the necessary adjustments in form, weight, etc.
6. Mirrors can assist in teaching correct technique. If mirrors are used, they should be non-breakable and secured to the wall.
7. To help avoid injuries, instructors should provide a warm up and stretch before lifting and a cool down and stretch at the end of each session.
8. When "maximum" lifts are taking place, extra care must be given to provide adequate spotters and instruction as to how to perform maximum lifts. Instructors should be cautioned to examine the benefit of less weight and more repetitions as opposed to more weight and fewer repetitions when "maximum's" are attempted.
9. All free weights must be returned to the storage area after each use and at the end of the lifting session.
10. Providing lifters with a written daily lifting plan is essential in keeping the lifters focused on their individual efforts as opposed to a free-lance program where the lifters decide how much to lift and how many repetitions to attempt.
11. All lifters must be instructed in the emergency plan for the weight facility before starting lifting exercises.

Supervision:

1. Instructors must be present at any time students are in the weight room. Instructors must be aware and move around.
2. Instructors are the last ones to leave a weight facility and make sure the facility is secure.
3. If an instructor observes an unsafe lifting technique, the instructor must stop the lift and correct the technique, in order to prevent injury to the lifter or those around the lifter.
4. All equipment must be returned to the proper storage area at the end of the lifting session.
5. Instructors are responsible for instructing spotters in the proper techniques and making sure spotters are being used when needed.
6. Free weights and maximum lifting sessions need additional supervision or complete attention of the supervisor(s).
7. Instructors should not try to supervise multiple areas including a weight area.
8. If the weight facility is a divided room, the supervisor should review the supervision expectations with their immediate supervisor before starting any lifting session.
9. Instructors should be very aware of the importance of using clamps on all free weights and assure that clamps are being used.