



# ALABAMA MUNICIPAL INSURANCE CORPORATION MUNICIPAL WORKERS COMPENSATION FUND, INC.



*Loss Control Division*

## **Risk Management Guidelines For Skateboarding and In-Line Skating Facilities**

Skateboarding and in-line skating are dynamic and fast growing sports. Citizens of many municipalities are now requesting public entities to provide public areas in which individuals can skateboard and in-line skate. The liabilities associated with allowing individuals to use public sidewalks and streets include personal bodily injury claims, improperly maintained sidewalks claims, and claims made by persons who may be injured by the skateboarders or skaters. Additionally, citizens might complain of harassment by persons participating in the skating activities which can also create a public relations problem for the municipality.

A controlled facility for skateboarding and in-line skating has the advantage of reducing the liability risks associated with skateboarders and in-line skaters using the public streets and sidewalks. There are risks associated with operating a skating facility and they should be carefully considered prior to the decision to provide a controlled environment for these activities. The potential for serious injury to both participants and spectators exists if the community has not taken appropriate measures to:

- Assure the physical safety and integrity of the facility.
- Train facility personnel.
- Establish and communicate safety rules to participants and spectators.
- Provide appropriate safety and health supplies and equipment in the event of an emergency.

### The Facility

The skateboarding industry is in the process of developing documented industry standards to provide consistency in the design and construction of obstacles. While these standards are under development, a community can take steps to reduce its risks if it chooses to offer a controlled facility for skateboarding and in-line skating.

The design and layout of the facility should be carefully considered during the decision process. Features that are commonly found in many of these facilities include a flat area for freestyle skating, a slalom course, a bowl, a ramp, a vertical wall, a full and half pipe, and dunes and valleys. The facility might resemble an in-ground pool or be set up with obstacles. Some of the materials used in the construction of the obstacles include concrete, plywood, molded fiberglass, plexiglas, wood, or metal. These areas may also include a pro shop, concessions areas, and bleachers. The best loss control guidelines for the facility should include the following:

- The design of the park layout and obstacles should meet or exceed best practices currently in place in the industry.

- A licensed architect or engineer should approve all obstacle design plans.
- Perimeter fencing and secured access should be provided to prevent unauthorized access into the area during non-operational hours.
- A minimum distance of 20 feet should separate obstacles, runs and fences.
- Obstacles and runs should be free of sharp edges.
- Temporary obstacles should be secured to prevent movement while in use.
- Platforms used for standing and recovery by participants which are over three feet in height must have standard hand rails with midrails and stairs.
- Decks attached to obstacles intended for waiting participants should have enough depth to offer protection from flying skateboards.

## Facility Supervision

Park staff should inspect the runs and obstacles on a daily basis with documentation of deficiencies and repairs. Wood structures require more frequent and thorough inspections to assure that there are no nails, screws, or splintered wood that could injure a participant. It will also be important for the staff to keep observers behind the fencing to protect them from injury by participants and potential flying skateboards. Controlled numbers of participants on each run and obstacle will help to reduce the potential of collisions between participants.

Facility management should make certain that all personnel receive adequate training and that the training is documented and maintained. Management must assure that personnel are actively supervising the facility activities during the hours of operations.

Additional facility management guidelines should include the following:

- Post and communicate park rules clearly to participants.
- Post the disclaimer “Use at your own Risk” prominently with the written rules.
- Require minors to provide written approval from a parent or guardian.
- Require safety equipment such as helmets and knee pads for all participants.
- Make training and instructions available to new participants.
- Require organized groups to provide certificates of insurance which are equal to or in excess of that carried by the municipality.
- Assure that first aid supplies are present at readily available locations within the park.
- Include First Aid training for staff members.
- Assure that phones are readily available to report emergencies.

NOTE: This document is not intended to be legal advice. It does not identify all the issues surrounding the particular topic. Public agencies are encouraged to review their procedures with an expert or an attorney who is knowledgeable about the topic. Reliance on this information is at the sole risk of the user.