

Risk Control Best Practices: Skatepark Design and Management

Skateparks can be a great way to engage with the youth in your community. These parks not only take the burden off of the Police by providing a designated location to skate but provide a healthy outdoor recreational opportunity. The guide below is designed to help establish risk management best practices for the safe design, construction, and operation of skateparks.



Construction

Selecting a contractor

A licensed and insured contractor specializing in the planning, design, and construction of skateboard parks should be used. As with any contract, be sure to transfer the risk to the contractor by obtaining a certificate of insurance with appropriate limits that name your entity as an additional insured on their policy. Ensure the agreement has a hold harmless and indemnification clause.

Maintenance

Consider budget and staffing for ongoing maintenance and inspections of the park.

Fire Planning

Check with the local Fire Department to determine what precautions are necessary.

Location

The location should be in an area that is open and visible from a road with easy access.

Handicapped Access

In keeping with the Americans with Disabilities Act, access to the facility, parking, restrooms, and viewing areas should be fully accessible.

Drainage

Ensure the park has adequate drainage to prevent puddles or ponding and slippery surfaces.

Keep in mind all skill levels

Set up separate areas for beginner, intermediate, and advanced skaters. The majority of skaters are beginner and intermediate. Apparatus for these skaters should be smaller, generate less speed, and be more easily approached and ridden.

Construction

Ramps and other events should be structurally sound and should meet applicable codes.

Design

Design

Develop a committee that can design a park that meets everyone's needs (the user, Public Safety, and Parks & Recreation staff.) Work with the skaters in the community to design a course that will be challenging yet safe for all skill levels.

General Access

The site should be fenced. There should be a minimum of six (6) feet to control access and the facility should be locked after hours. Ample parking should be provided. Provide safe areas for spectators to assemble, so that they are screened from activity.

Night Operation

If the facility is to be operated at night, the facility should be well-lit.

Bikes

Be prepared to address the issue of bikes and in-line skates in the park. Some ramps are not designed for bikes and can be easily damaged. Allowing the use of bikes on your equipment could also turn away some of the less skilled users.

No Cross Patterns

While cross patterns might maximize available space, they are an invitation to disaster. Skate paths should run in parallel lines to keep skaters from running into one another.

Ramps/Transitions

Obstacle heights should be appropriate for the experience level of the skaters. Transitions, slopes, and bank angles should be appropriate to the height of the equipment as well as the intended use.

Emergency Egress

Emergency access to all areas, even the bottoms of concrete bowls, should be provided to facilitate the extrication of injured participants.

Size

The size of the park should be big enough to allow for safe movement throughout and to limit the potential for collisions.

Material	PRO	CON
Wood	Relatively low initial cost Good for indoor parks	Requires more maintenance Marine plywood is best but can be expensive. Masonite or hardboard is more durable
Steel	Low maintenance	Can get extremely hot in the direct sun and have sharp edges
Concrete	Low maintenance and cost	Installation must be done properly to avoid ongoing problems
Fasteners		Avoid staples and nails which can loosen and cause an injury

Operation

- Most states have a Recreational Use statute that limits liability for municipalities should an accident occur when the public is using their recreational facilities/parks when there is no fee for use. Depending on the state, when a fee is charged, your protection under this statute could be limited or waived. It is best to not charge a fee at all.
- The park should be offered to users at their own risk when possible and not supervised.
- Hours, rules, and procedures regarding inclement weather should be posted on your website, social media, and at the park.
- Communicate issues of vandalism through social media channels as well to bring attention to the problem.
- Encourage participants to wear personal protective equipment; i.e. helmets, elbow pads, knee pads, wrist guards, and appropriate footwear. Helmets should fit snugly and should not restrict hearing or obstruct vision. (The CPSC and National Center for Injury Prevention and Control have reported that wrist guards and elbow pads help to reduce the risk of injuries to these areas by more than 80% and knee pads reduce injuries by one-third.)
- If accidents occur, conduct an investigation to determine if any corrective action is needed to prevent them in the future.

Supervised Parks

- If a park is supervised, participants or their parents, if they are minors, should be required to sign a waiver/hold harmless agreement.
- Rules should be strictly enforced. Ensure the staff you hire is mature enough to perform this function.
- Inspections should be conducted daily.
- Employees must be trained in first aid, and what to do in the event of an accident.
- Personal Protective Equipment should be required.



Security

- Police should routinely patrol the skatepark to deter vandalism.
- If possible the fence gate should be locked when the park is closed.
- Ensure the park is well lit so that it can be visually inspected from the road.

Maintenance

- Work with the manufacturer or installer of the park equipment to determine what preventative maintenance is needed. If possible enter into a maintenance agreement so that they can perform PM or replace parts as needed.
- Ensure you have an adequate budget to maintain the park as time goes on. Typically as a park ages or the users who helped create and design the park age, the park gets neglected which can increase your exposure.
- Perform frequent and documented inspections of the park. The frequency will depend on use but should be no less than once a week. If a park is heavily used, then a daily inspection would be necessary. See the sample form below.
- Perform regular preventative maintenance, seal cracks, tighten screws, remove litter, etc.
- Document all inspections and maintenance.
- When damaged equipment is identified the park should be closed until it can be repaired.



Signage

- Post signs at the entrance and/or throughout the park explaining the rules of the park.
- Signs should recommend that skaters wear safety equipment, knee pads, helmets, elbow pads, and wrist guards.
- Signage should clearly state the hours the park is open.
- Replace the signs as needed depending on wear and tear or vandalism.
- Ensure the sign cites the local recreational use statute.

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Skatepark Rules

- Participants are encouraged to wear appropriate safety equipment such as helmets, gloves, elbow, and knee pads, and appropriate footwear.
- Adult supervision is recommended for all users aged 10 and under.
- Participants are encouraged to inspect their equipment prior to entrance into the facility.
- No skating outside of marked boundaries within the skatepark.
- No more than one person should be allowed on a skateboard at a time.
- Exercise caution when using the skatepark and respect the right of way of skaters.
- Be mindful of skaters at all skill levels.
- Skate under control at times.
- Skate courteously.
- Skate to the right of the person on your left.
- No smoking, alcoholic beverages, or drugs inside the park.
- Eating and drinking are allowed in designated areas only.
- There should be no glass bottles inside the fenced area.
- Please dispose of trash properly.
- Outside equipment such as homemade rails or ramps is prohibited in the park.
- In the case of the surface being wet due to rain or other reasons, the park should be closed at the discretion of the Park & Recreation Department staff.
- Exercise respect.
- Users of this facility assume all risks of injury or damage to personal property.
- This park is made available in accordance with laws governing recreational use (site local code).
- The City/Town of _____ does not assume responsibility for injuries or damage to personal property.
- In the event of an emergency dial 9-1-1.

Risk Control: Skatepark Inspection Checklist

Inspections should be conducted based on the usage of the skatepark, but no less than once per month. Document your inspections and any corrective action taken using this sample form

Entity Name:		Employee Name:				Date:	
Inspection Item	Yes	No	N/A	Repair/Action Needed	Assigned To	Repair-By Date	Date Completed
Parking lot lights and skate area lights working and well lit?							
Are building parking lots, walkways, entrances, ADA ramps, and stairways free from slip/trip/fall hazards?							
Are surface areas clear from rocks, sand/dirt and other debris?							
Is the park clear from any ramps or equipment that is not part of the original design?							
Is the fence and entry gates in good condition and working properly?							
Is the park free from vandalism?							
Is the park free of any puddles or ponding that could create a slip hazard?							
Has litter been placed in trash receptacles and emptied?							
Do rails have end caps installed?							
Are all transitions smooth on ramps?							
Is the park free of significant cracks or gaps in the concrete/pavement that need patching?							
Are tree limbs, brush and overgrowth cut away from the park?							
Are rules posted and in good condition for clear viewing?							
Are rails, bolts, etc free of any rust or corrosion?							
Is the park free of any sharps found such as needles?							
Are rails in good condition, no cracked welds or damage?							
Comments:							

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