

Temporary Ice Skating Rinks

Temporary ice skating rinks have become a recent popular outdoor recreation trend. These rinks are generally low-cost to construct and can be a safer alternative than allowing skating on a local pond or lake. The rinks are generally constructed in a flat field with easy access and are typically near a park or school with good lighting. Construction varies from simpler rinks where plastic is laid down to protect the grass. Wood timbers are used like concrete forms to shape the ice to rinks where kits can be purchased with interlocking, self-leveling floor panels and sideboards that look similar to permanent ice rinks. Most rinks are constructed in November, flooded in December, used in January and February, and then dismantled in March. Below are some risk management considerations for your temporary ice skating rink.



Understanding Your Exposures

Installation

Who will install the rink? Volunteers or a professional contractor? The answer may depend on the type of rink you are installing. Some ice skating rink kits are designed for "do it yourself" installation and are fairly easy to construct. However, if using wood timbers or forms, it may be best to hire a contractor with the experience to help ensure a smooth and flat finish to the ice. If a contractor is used, be sure to require a certificate of insurance and name your entity as an additional insured on their policy.

Inadequate Maintenance & Inspections

Depending on the type of rink and the weather. The ongoing maintenance requirements will vary. The ice may occasionally require a top coat to ensure a smooth skate or to fill in cracks. Snow will need to be removed in a way that does not cause damage to the ice. If sideboards are installed, they may require adjusting to ensure they are secure and sturdy and that the gates function properly. Regardless of the construction, inspect the ice and any equipment regularly. Please document all inspections and promptly follow up on any issues identified. If a safety issue is identified, close the rink until it can be repaired. Additionally, any injuries or incidents reported should be investigated and followed up on, if necessary, with corrective action to prevent re-occurrence.

Location

The rink's location should be considered carefully to allow for adequate lighting and accessibility. Skating at night should only be permitted if adequate lighting can be supplied to the rink. If not, the rink should be limited to daylight hours only. Although the rink is temporary, the rink should be accessible with entrance areas as free from slip/fall hazards as possible. Other considerations should include, the proximity to school grounds and if the rink will be a distraction to students during class. If the rink is located on school grounds, will they permit use during school hours? If the rink is located at a park, is it far enough away from playgrounds, sledding hills, etc, so they will not cause additional hazards? Can emergency responders access the rink quickly in the event of an injury?

Hockey

In most cases, if a skating rink is in the planning stages, it is motivated with an end user group in mind. This most likely will be for those who want to free skate; however, it is prudent to plan for all potential users to avoid conflict and injuries to the skaters. If hockey is permitted on the rink, it is best to set aside a separate time for pick-up hockey and free skating. This will help to avoid injuries from a stray hockey puck or hockey stick. If hockey is to be permitted, it is best to provide goals as opposed to allowing the public to bring in and install their own. In fact, it is best to remove any outside equipment or materials found on the rink as soon as possible. This equipment can damage the ice causing a trip hazard to the skaters.

Fees

From a risk management perspective one of the most important decisions involved with providing a new recreational space for residents is whether or not to charge a fee as a means to help offset any costs, in this case associated with the rink install. Most states have laws regarding recreational use and protections from liability in the event of any damages or injuries suffered while recreating on public land. However, most of these laws only apply when a fee is not charged for use of this space. The same restrictions may apply for any City/Town sponsored skating lessons or hockey leagues. Some exceptions exist but it is best to consult with your counsel before charging any fees.

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Rink Rules

Rink Rules should be developed with state and local codes in mind and should be reviewed by your attorney.

Some rules might include the following:

- Hours of operation.
- How to report any concerns.
- "Use at Your Own Risk". Users of this facility assume all risks of injury. This park is made available by recreational use laws (site local code).
- The City/Town of _____ does not assume responsibility for injuries or damage to personal property.
- Users are encouraged to wear appropriate safety equipment such as helmets, elbow pads and knee pads.
- Adult supervision is required for all users under the age of 10 or who have limited skating experience.
- Skate courteously.
- No smoking/alcohol/drugs allowed on park property.
- Food and drink are not allowed in the rink.
- Please dispose of trash properly.
- No outside equipment or goals are permitted.
- The rink may be closed at the discretion of the Parks Department.

Risk Control: Temporary Ice Rink Inspection Checklist

Inspections should be conducted based on the usage of the ice rink. Daily inspections are preferred. Document your inspections and any corrective action taken using this sample form. Customize this form as necessary specific to the exposures on your playground.

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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