

# Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

## Safe Strength By Derek Neubauer

Strength and conditioning programs offer many benefits to athletes including increased performance level and reduced injury risk during competition. However, the benefits of strength training are diminished with improper technique, lack of discipline and inadequate weight room safety. The weight room itself should be set up in such a way so that all the equipment can be used in a safe and efficient way:

- Allow clear pathways and aisles throughout the entire room.
- Keep emergency exit doors clear of equipment.
- If floor exercises (deadlifts, power cleans, etc.) are part of the strength and conditioning program, then a clear area should be kept at all times for that purpose.
- Put similar equipment together to prevent foot traffic from distracting people who are actively lifting.
- The weight and fitness rooms should be locked at all times when no supervision is available.
- Safety rules should be established and should be posted throughout the weight room.

The safety rules should be developed and be tailored to the specific equipment that is in use as well as the type of supervision that is in place. Supervision should be present at all times when the weight and fitness rooms are in use. The person in charge of the supervision will most likely be in charge of the lifting program, but he or she should always have an eye out for safe and proper use of equipment, assist in training new student athletes on lifts, spotting and

exercises. The following are examples of basic safety rules:

- No horseplay.
- Proper clothing and attire must be worn at all times. If the proper clothing was forgotten then there will be no workout.
- Lifters should be encouraged to have a workout partner with similar lifting abilities. Spotters are required for all lifts.
- A lifting program should be established so that increases in weights are not too much for the lifter to handle. The plan must be followed.
- Athletes are not permitted to use the weight room when supervision is not available.
- All free weights should have collars to secure the weights on the bar while in use.
- Weights should be placed back in their proper location once the exercise is completed.
- Do not throw or drop weights.
- Clean off benches and equipment after use.
- Do not attempt a new lift without proper training.
- Warm up to begin workout and warm up to heavier weights.
- Encourage proper pace of lift and proper breathing. Provide training of these for new athletes.

Occasionally school weight room and fitness rooms will be used by the community. A lot of school buildings are considered a community hub and the weight room may be available to people who are not

students or staff members of the school. Before anyone from the community starts to workout in the weight room, they should be required to read and sign a release-of-liability waiver. Also, the community should have its own hours for use of the weight room. These times should not include times in which student athletes are using the weight room. The community should also be appropriately supervised at all times and all weight room rules must apply to anyone that is using the rooms.

Weight training is a relatively safe way to stay in shape and prevent injuries. However, accidents do occur, and most times it is because the weight room safety rules have not been followed. With proper training and supervision, the strength training and conditioning can improve the school's sports teams, but also improve the lives of students that walk through the weight room in the future.

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For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or [sorr@cmregent.com](mailto:sorr@cmregent.com).