

The Redwoods Group Insurance Program for Camps

# RISK MANAGEMENT TOPIC

## TOPIC: Soccer Goal Safety

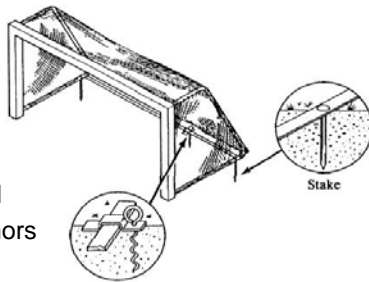
More than 200,000 children annually are injured badly enough while playing soccer to be taken to a doctor or hospital. Many of these injuries involve soccer goals, but such incidents generally do not arise from actually playing the game. Most of the soccer goals in use for children's soccer are portable or semi-permanent, i.e., they are designed to be removed after use, for mowing, etc. Some incidents happen when the goal is being moved, but most occur when kids are using them as a jungle gym or monkey bars, either during a game or practice or when the goals are unattended. Countless injuries and 34 deaths involving soccer goals have occurred since 1979.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and ASTM International (formerly American Standards for Testing and Materials) both advocate a tip-over resistance of 200 pounds for soccer goals – that is the equivalent of two 12-year-olds swinging on them. This standard is not normally statutory but it is the yardstick against which liability suits probably will be measured. Much more importantly, it is a way to keep kids safe.

**The first component in preventing soccer goal related injuries is adequate anchoring of portable and semi-permanent goals** – whenever they are in place, regardless of their size and height. They should be secure from wind, collision by players, and horseplay.

There are several means of properly anchoring soccer goals. The number and type of anchors used depends on factors such as soil type, goal weight, and goal design. Examples include...

- auger style anchors that screw into the ground
- peg, stake, or j-hook style anchors that are driven into the ground
- semi-permanent anchors that bolt or tether to a secured base that is buried underground (only for dedicated soccer fields)
- sandbags or counterweights (only for artificial or indoor surfaces; must be of sufficient weight; must not create or increase trip or other injury potentials)



Using only goals that are well designed, solidly built, and properly maintained will reduce the potential for accidental injury. Net pegs (the tapered, metal stakes used to secure the net) should *never* be used to anchor the soccer goal itself – they are inadequate for the task.

Anchors may be purchased - locally or online. Kwik Goal ([http://www.kwikgoal.com/list\\_128.html](http://www.kwikgoal.com/list_128.html)) offers a good selection of anchors as well as information about selecting the best anchor for your specific needs.

A critical corollary of anchoring is monitoring to ensure that the anchors are properly set.

- Goals that are set up and taken down after each use should have one person responsible for placement and another one responsible for verification with each being done after every goal movement, and before every practice or game.
- Goals that remain in place from day to day should be monitored by every team that uses them. A tool to aid that monitoring is Goal Alert™ ([www.goalalert.net](http://www.goalalert.net)). Utilizing an auger and pressure plate the device displays an *OKAY TO PLAY* flag unless movement exceeds 1/2" – then a red *DANGER* flag is raised. However, it is meant to supplement, not replace, four-point anchoring and physical monitoring and though it provides a visual reminder it is not a fail-safe system.



**The second component in preventing soccer goal related injuries is supervision and education** – for stored goals, unsupervised goals, and supervised goals. Most injuries involving soccer goals have occurred when the children playing on or near them were not being actively supervised. Since children do not usually consider potential harm before acting constant, deliberate supervision is needed, as is focused training of coaches, parents, and children.

- Train coaches on how to describe the dangers of playing on soccer goals in kid-meaningful terms.

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- Send information home or inform the parents at parent orientation of the dangers; explain their responsibility and enlist their assistance in supervising their children during games and practices.
- Demonstrate to the children how easily a soccer goal can tip over before starting your first practice.
- Diligently supervise the children when on outdoor play fields. Pay special attention to those who are not participating in the game or scrimmage – kids often wander; many love to climb and swing on anything that is handy. If they find an unattended soccer goal, the thrill of finding something on which to climb will very possibly overcome all of your warnings and admonitions.

**The third part of preventing soccer goal related injuries is proper storage when not in use.** Goals left on the playing field should receive daily monitoring to ensure that they cannot be overturned by unsupervised play. Goals that are removed from the playing field should be secured so that they cannot wiggle, tip, or fall.

- Store them in a locked storage room or building.
- OR
- Secure every goal post to a fixed object such as a building or a substantial fence with a locked, tightly-wrapped cable or chain.
  - Removing the net reduces the temptation and easy access to climbing and also removes some of the potential for injury to those who move the goals.
  - Placing the two goals face to face and connecting the frames together snugly at several points with a locked, tightly-wrapped cable or chain removes easy access to the horizontal bars. The joined goals still need to be secured to a fixed object.

Remember, kids cannot be allowed to assist in the moving or storage of soccer goals. Such activities should be done when children are not present if at all possible.

**Climbing on goals and hanging from the crosspiece are common causes of needless injury** that could be significantly reduced by observing the tips in the three

sections above. In addition, all moveable goals should have warning labels affixed to them.

- Place warning labels on all goal posts and crossbars.
- Ensure that all warning labels are visible and in good condition.

Free warning labels may be obtained from...

- The Redwoods Group – [www.redwoodsgroup.com](http://www.redwoodsgroup.com) contact your risk manager or 800.463.8546
- Safe Goals – c/o SICA, 2000 Castlewood Dr, N. Palm Beach, FL 33408
- Kwik Goal – 800.243.0533



**Additional information may be obtained from...**

- US Consumer Product Safety Commission <http://www.cpsc.gov>
  - Document 326: Guidelines for Moveable Soccer Goal Safety
  - Document 5118: Moveable Soccer Goals Can Fall Over on Children
- ASTM ([www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org)) – specifically: Standard for tip-resistant soccer goals (F2673-08)
- Anchored for Safety – soccer safety advocacy group <http://www.anchoredforsafety.org/>
- Kwik Goal – <http://www.kwikgoal.com/safetyfirst> (Soccer Goal Safety Booklet)

**Anchoring soccer goals is important – as is proper storage and monitoring of both.** Be diligent to inform all staff, volunteers, members, parents, and players of these safety issues. Ensure that staff members and coaches fully understand their roles in educating and supervising the children, anchoring and monitoring active goals, and securing inactive goals. Enlist the parents' assistance in supervising their children during practice and games, especially those children who are not actively playing. The coach's eyes understandably are largely on those who are actively participating.

**Please share this message widely – prevent a tragedy.**

**Please call us at 800-463-8546 to discuss this or any other risk management safety tip, or visit our web site at [www.redwoodsgroup.com](http://www.redwoodsgroup.com) to learn more about camp risk management issues.**