

# RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

## Skate Parks

Nearly 26,000 people are hospitalized each year as a result of skateboard injuries.<sup>1</sup> About 75% of these injuries involve broken wrists and ankles, facial damage, and other broken bones. Nearly all of the rest were injuries to the head. Although the amount of skateboarding injuries is less than that of most sports, skateboarding injuries are often more severe.

Skate parks are primarily designed for skateboarding and inline skating activities, but not bicycles. Accidents from collisions, slips, falls, etc., can cause severe injuries, brain damage, and even death. Below are general guidelines for design and construction, rules and signage, and general maintenance that, if properly followed, will decrease the likelihood of accidents.

### Design and Construction

The design and construction oversight of any skate park should be performed by qualified, third-party skate park engineers. General guidelines to follow when considering different designs include:

1. It is recommended that parks be built with smooth concrete. Materials like wood or steel require stricter maintenance, regular repairs, and can increase the chances of injury. It is important that the right kind of concrete is used, as some kinds are safer than others; consult with your engineer for advice (on finish, aggregate size, strength, and resistance to wear).
2. Parks should be divided into three main areas by skill level: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Activities in the park should correspond to the right skill level (for example, there should not be rails and large ramps in the beginners' area). Buffer zones should be installed that clearly separate each skill level area.
3. Proper lighting should be installed in all areas of the park. Ensure that the lighting is bright enough so that no shadows are created. A general guideline is 15-30 foot candles at the skating surface.<sup>2</sup> Lights should be at least 30 ft. high to provide space for aerial maneuvers. If no lighting can be installed, the skate park should be closed before dark.
4. Designated viewing areas should be installed to prevent non-skating viewers from walking into the obstacle area. Viewing areas should be separated from the obstacle area by fencing or at least 15 ft. of space. If benches or bleachers are used in the viewing area, ensure that they are tightly secured to the foundation. Ensure that bleacher heights satisfy all relevant safety regulations in your local city. Skating should be prohibited in the viewing area.



<sup>1</sup> US Consumer Products Safety Commission, "Skateboards", Pub. 93

<sup>2</sup> Illuminating Engineering Society of North America, IES Lighting Handbook (1981)

# RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

5. Sturdy fencing should be installed around the skate park to prevent young children from entering and to prevent flying skate boards or other equipment from injuring onlookers. Fencing should contain locks to decrease the chances of entrance into the park during closed hours.
6. Parks should be constructed away from areas where surfaces are likely to get wet. (For example, do not construct parks near sprinkler systems.)

## Rules and Signage

Skate park rules and safety standards should be posted and clearly visible to all park guests. In addition, ensure whether or not city ordinances require that skaters be cited when not following the rules and prepare accordingly. Below are some examples of rules and safety standards to consider putting on signs.

“Fastened helmets, knee pads, and elbow pads must be worn at all times by skaters.”

“Only skateboards or roller blades are permitted on course.”

“Skating is prohibited outside of designated obstacle area.”

“No food, drinks, or gum allowed in obstacle area.”

“No alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or glass containers are permitted anywhere in the skate park.”

“Skate at your own risk.”

“Acts of vandalism and/or graffiti will result in a fine and immediate removal from the park.”

“Viewers are not allowed to enter the obstacle area.”

“Neither the city nor the skate park is responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged equipment.”

“Abusive language and fighting will result in immediate citation or removal from the park.”

“Skate in areas that are designed only for your skill level.”



# RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Ensure that all signs contain a phone number to contact if violations are observed. All signs should instruct guests to dial 911 in emergencies.

## General Maintenance Considerations

Regularly maintaining skate parks is cost-effective and will quickly decrease the chances of accidents and injuries. Damage to skate parks, if not repaired, can result in substantial reconstruction. For these reasons, developing a comprehensive preventative maintenance routine is recommended. Below are guidelines to follow for properly maintaining a skate park.



1. Create a written maintenance checklist in accordance with which regular maintenance is to be performed. (A sample checklist is attached.)
2. Document all repairs, removals, or replacements of any equipment on the skate park and file for at least three years.
3. Consider providing a 'comment box' for skaters to provide information on areas in need of improvement or repair.
4. Ensure that local law enforcement agencies are aware of the skate park (even during the design and construction phases) and are available to patrol it if necessary.
5. Consider hiring staff to monitor the park if necessary.
6. Ensure that the surrounding landscape of the park is free of debris and other potential safety hazards (rocks, twigs, brush, gravel, etc., can be hazardous in areas where skating is likely). Cut away any tree branches that overhang the obstacle area of the park.
7. Ensure that trash receptacles are available throughout the park. (Skaters will usually remove debris and trash themselves, so it is important that trash receptacles are always nearby.) Trash should be emptied regularly to prevent overflow. Use receptacles that can be tightly secured to the ground to decrease the chances of them being used as obstacles.
8. While some parks allow graffiti, it is not recommended since it can increase the occurrence of crime. Maintain a "no tolerance" attitude toward graffiti. Encourage park guests to report instances of graffiti or 'tagging' whenever observed. Ensure that graffiti is removed or painted over within 24 hours to prevent more occurrences. If necessary, close the park until the graffiti is completely removed.

# RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

9. If graffiti needs to be removed, do not remove it by using substances that will make the park surface slippery or rough (e.g., do not use sandblasting, water blasting, scraping, or non-stick spray-ons.) Consult with design professionals for advice on the best type of spray on removal product.

For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (949) 260-5042 or by e-mail at [riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com](mailto:riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com)

# RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

## Skate Park Maintenance Checklist

Please print all information as clearly and accurately as possible.

Name of Skate Park: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Skate Park: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Item	Yes	No	Comments
Signage is posted and is clearly visible			
Signage is in adequate condition and free of damage			
Signage includes a phone number for reporting violations or maintenance concerns			
Proper lighting is installed throughout the skate park			
If no lighting is installed, signage is posted stating that park not open at night hours			
Park is patrolled by law enforcement when necessary			
Park surface is free of debris and trash			
Park surface is uniformly smooth and free of damage			
The park is free of graffiti and/or 'tagging'			
Surrounding fencing is free of damage			
All obstacle equipment (railing, ramps, stairs, etc.) is free of damage			
Trash receptacles are tightly locked to the ground			
Trash receptacles are not overflowing			
Park is locked during closed hours			

# RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Benches, bleachers, and other sitting areas are tightly secured			
Concrete is free of chips, cracks or other damage			

This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or [riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com](mailto:riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com).