

## Soccer Goal Safety

### Falling Soccer Goals

Many are surprised to learn that 31 people have been killed and 51 have been seriously injured due to falling soccer goals! Movable soccer goals come in a variety of materials and weights. In some cases a 22 pound force can bring down a 400 pound soccer goal. Consider wind conditions, slope of the field, soft soil conditions, and human contact, and the risks begin to add up. Often the goal falls when players hang from the crossbar or when they tip it forward to attach the net to the goal. The player standing underneath the bar can be struck on the head or neck. Anchored for Safety ([www.anchoredforsafety.org](http://www.anchoredforsafety.org)) is a soccer goal awareness organization that was created in memory of Zachary Tran who was killed when an unanchored goal fell on him. They report on and keep track of soccer goal injuries from 1979 to present.

### The Solutions

- Never hang from or climb on soccer goals,
- Always anchor or counterweight soccer goals before practice or games
- Always store goals properly when not in use.
- When moving a wheeled soccer goal, push it backwards rather than forwards so that it won't tip. Other types of movable soccer goals should be lifted with as many people as possible to ensure even distribution of weight and minimal risk to life and limb. Anchor or counterweight the goal again after it has been moved.
- When putting up a soccer net, use a ladder or reach system such as the Quick-Pic system. If you must tip the goal to attach the net, do so with 4 or more adults to control the goal and do not allow players to train around the net at that time.

### Anchors and Counterweights

There are a variety of anchors that pound into the ground (Augers, stakes, spikes, J-hooks, U-hooks). These can be perfectly adequate but be aware that soft or wet ground will reduce their ability to hold the goal. The anchors themselves can be a hazard to a player falling or sliding into the net.

Store the anchors when not in use - a civic worker at one of our local pitches went over an anchor with his lawnmower, sending shards flying through the air. Bad for the mowers and potential disaster for anyone nearby at the time.

Semi-permanent anchors essentially attach underground and secure to the back post. These systems do work very well but being unable to move the goal can be a disadvantage to certain types of training.

Sandbags and other counterweights are most often used on hard surfaces such as turf. The only problem is determining how much weight is required to keep the goal from tipping. As much as 150 kg (330 pounds) may be required to keep a

full size net anchored. (If you want to get technical, the formula takes the goal height, divided by the length of the goal's side bars, multiplied by 112).

### **Inspect the Nets and Goals**

Perform a visual check of the whole goal for missing nuts bolts, clips or other net fittings and damage to the frame of the goal. The visual inspection should occur at the beginning of the season and then weekly throughout the season. Some clubs will test their goals for strength and stability as suggested by the Football Association.

A soccer net can trap body parts or cause cuts if the mesh is too wide or the cords too thin. Check the net periodically to see if cords are coming loose. If enough cords come loose that a players head can fit through then the net must be repaired or replaced.

### **Soccer Goalposts**

Most soccer injuries happen in the open field. However there are also injuries that occur due to contact with the goal posts. These injuries include concussions, neck and spine injuries, broken teeth, broken bones, cuts and bruises.

There are pads to cover the goal posts and though purists will say that these pads may alter the flight of the ball, they have come down in size to as low as 5/8". Soccer goals are even being made adjustable to accommodate for the loss of goal space taken up by post pads.

An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.

Yours in Sport,

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