

Big Bounce, Big Injury

Children can be very severely injured when trampolines are improperly used and supervised. Recently, Markel learned of two serious claims resulting from improper trampoline use: one child broke her leg, and a teenager fractured his neck.

Your gymnastics risk management practices must include strategies to prevent trampoline accidents. Here are some guidelines:

- When supervising groups, make sure coaches are in close proximity to the group.
- Never allow a student to execute a routine or use equipment without confirming it is safe.
- Know where students and visitors are at all times.
- Keep supervision ratios to manageable levels. Markel recommends no more than 8 students to 1 coach.
- If you have a party or guest gymnast, brief them on your gym rules before allowing them access to the workout area.
- Purchase competitive equipment (not backyard equipment) that can stand up to rigorous use, even if it is more expensive. Cheaper can ultimately cost you more, especially if you are sued because of an injury resulting from your use of improper equipment.

The *USAG Gymnastics Risk Management Safety Handbook – 2002 Edition* recommends the following:

- Allow only one person on the trampoline at a time.
- Make sure proper warm-up precedes trampoline use.
- Do not allow uncontrolled bouncing.
- Ensure athletes use an overhead spotting belt when performing difficult moves.
- Make sure the trampoline is surrounded by mats and spotters during use. Keep trampolines away from walls, structures, and other equipment.
- Do not permit knee drops and stomach drops without proper instruction.

On a daily basis, inspect the trampoline bed, springs, and supports. Keep a written record of your inspections. Do not use the trampoline without shock-absorbing pads that completely cover its springs, hooks, and frame. When finished using your trampoline, if it is not recessed; close it, lock it, and move it away from the activity area so it does not become a hazard.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.