

Design Plans for Cancellations and/or Lockdowns

Due to Weather, Unforeseen Building Failures and Threats

Gymnastics club owners and managers have a major responsibility to make prudent decisions regarding the care of the athletes, their families and employees. There are unforeseen events that occur everyday that put us in a position to make decisions on the spot. Clubs should establish a positive relationship with the local rescue teams and police so they are familiar with your business and the volume of customers that are in your care.

As USA Gymnastics Professionals, we are **Risk Managers** everyday.

- Identify potential risks. Conduct “What if” scenarios with staff to think of possible crisis situations and procedures.
- Develop a plan. Explore the resources in your community.
- Implement the plan as needed. Monitor results.
- Review insurance coverage and considerations for emergency planning.

Weather & Other Natural Disasters

A common interruption in daily operations can be extreme weather conditions or natural disasters that vary in different parts of the country. Minnesota cancelled five school days in 2014 due to inclement weather. That was an unusual winter!

Tornados & blizzards are more common in the Midwest. Sample plan:

- If classes are already in session when the warning is issued, move the athletes, parents and staff to a safe location until further information is available.
 - The in-ground pit can be a safe location for students to take shelter with 8” mats lightly placed over the students.
 - Parents should be moved to interior rooms away from windows like bathrooms and hallways. Stay put until cleared for activity.
 - Drills should be conducted in advance to better prepare all participants.
- If classes need to be cancelled, all parties should be notified through the established social media channels. A late start is another option to consider. A make-up class should be provided for all missed classes due to weather interruptions.

Other possible weather cancellations and natural disasters can be found on **ready.gov**. It is an excellent resource to prepare, plan and stay informed. They offer planning considerations for a wide variety of disasters listed below:



Facility Failures

Each gymnastics venue has a potential of a failure of some sort over time. A plan should be established to have all participants stop activity and stay at their event or evacuate based on the severity of the failure. Some of the more common facility failures includes:

- Power outages
- Gas leaks
- Plumbing failures
- Heating/AC Failures
- Equipment Failures and/or Cyber-Attacks

It is important to contact the appropriate utility or technical experts when there is a threatening situation requiring a professional evaluation. Have a plan for evacuating customers to a safe location. Contact the surrounding businesses to establish an agreed upon location to take refuge until it is safe to re-enter.

Some facility interruptions can be more unusual. There was a club in St. Paul that had a deer break through the glass door overnight and ran through the facility bleeding all night. They had to close operations for several days for repairs due to this unexpected intruder. Bees, bats and other rodents could be reason to close if they pose a threat to the customers. Customers should be given a make-up opportunity for any missed classed due to a facility failure.

Criminal Interruptions

Invite the local authorities in for a **site survey** of your facility to learn if there are any recommendations for safety and security. Surveillance cameras, clear exits, and advice on lockdowns are typically covered during these surveys. Lockdowns are used in extreme cases. More often they recommend “moving to a safe place” or getting outside to a safe location.



Car break-ins have become more common in parking lots at gymnastics, swimming and dance facilities. Parents and staff should be alerted not to leave valuables in their cars. Staff should be advised to leave with a buddy for added security.

The local authorities recognize that we can't always know when a situation requires police backup. Therefore they recommend calling 911 when there is any suspicious activity or individuals that may be a threat. Some gymnastics clubs have installed silent panic buttons to reach the police quickly. Alert your staff to be proactive in these situations and to become familiar with parents that pick up students. They should not be afraid to approach an unfamiliar guest to introduce themselves and ask what child they have come to watch.

The police urge businesses to prepare for any unforeseen threats including an active shooter. **“Run..Hide..Fight”** was created for businesses to respond to an active shooter crisis situation and can be found on **fbi.gov**.



For the Public: Responding to an Active Shooter Crisis Situation

This video, recently produced by the Houston Mayor's Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security, dramatizes an active shooter incident in the workplace. Its purpose is to educate the public on how to respond during such an incident. **Warning: The initial sequence in this video may be disturbing.**

- Watch Video

Security systems are critical at all gymnastics facilities. Business closures are costly and inconvenient if there is an intruder that causes havoc overnight.

Medical Considerations

It is our professional responsibility to provide first aid and proper care in the event there is an injury or crisis. Invite in professionals to train and renew certifications for staff that are in leadership roles.

Host a **pit and tramp extrication clinic** with your local fire and rescue teams. They can become familiar with your facility and the unique equipment and floor plans of the gym. USA Gymnastics has produced a valuable DVD to show prior to the actual rehearsal. They appreciate this exercise so they are better prepared in the event of injuries or other extreme facility disruptions.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cdc.gov will address any outbreaks and concerns that will be relevant to your business. All programs should be proactive to prevent the spread of flus and colds with frequent hand washing and sanitizing. Train employees and customers to keep hands away from face, eyes and noses. Recommend coughing into a tissue or a sleeve to help prevent the spread of these illnesses. Encourage sick students and employees to stay home. Each community has an action plan for schools and businesses if a pandemic has spread through populations across a large region.

Supervision Considerations

Any of these situations could result in a unexpected shut down of a business if things should escalate to an unsafe level:

Missing Student

The news of a missing student is everyone's nightmare. This has happened at all gyms, where a parent comes to the front desk and can't find their child. Train staff to stay calm and ask questions that can help determine if they might still be in class, be in the bathroom or have been picked up by their carpool. Once all search options have been considered, contact 911 if the child is still missing.

Disruptive or Abusive Parents

Stay calm and approach this parent with an offer to help. If they continue being disruptive, dial 911. There have even been situations when a parent was arrested in the lobby due to a domestic complaint. Report any suspicious behavior to child protection.

Non-Custodial Parents

Behavior of non-custodial parents can be unusual and sometimes desperate. Call 911 if you see them filming in the parking lot or engaging in a dispute with the legal guardian or child.

Benefits of Crisis Planning for the gymnastics club owner:

- **Reduces Fear**
- **Reduces Anxiety**
- **Reduces losses**

Any finally, we can't eliminate the dangers and risks in a crisis but we can do everything possible to be prepared for the unexpected.

Plan for the worst...prepare for the best!