



October 27, 2020

WAMOA Meeting (20 minutes)

Introduction of NWAP by Michelle Giles

Today we plan to discuss bleacher and grandstand safety and the guidelines that surround the required inspections. We will be going through many of the great questions that we received from you.

1. Can you give me a little history about how and when safety standards were created for bleachers and grandstands?
 - a. In 1999 the US House authorized House Resolution 836 known as the “Bleacher Safety Act of 1999” stemming from the death of 6-year-old Toby Lee and a rash of other incidents ending with serious injuries. As a result of this act the International Code Council proposed a uniform International Building Code which included specific requirements for new bleachers as well as retrofitting bleachers. In addition, Congress required, within six months of the act, that the Consumer Product Safety Commission issue a bleacher standard for production, erection and retrofitting of bleachers and grandstands facilities. The Commission was also given the inspection and record-keeping authority with the ability to impose civil penalties if the new standards are not followed.
 - b. During the CPSC’s discovery process they found that in 1999 alone there were 22,100 bleacher associated injuries requiring emergency room treatment. 28 percent of those were results from falls from bleachers to the surface below and 4,910 of those falls involved children under the age of 15.

2. Who or what is the ICC?
 - a. International Code Council
 - b. Oversees 15 international building codes. Consists of members in 38 countries
 - c. Its stated mission is “To provide the codes, tools, and resources that members rely on, building safety professionals turn to, and manufacturers and the public trust.”

3. What does the ICC say about bleacher and grandstand safety?
 - a. In 2017 the ICC updated their code standards and Chapter 5 is dedicated to “existing bleachers, folding and telescopic seating, and grandstands”.
 - b. As part of this standard, all existing seating with a capacity of 75 seats or more are mandated to receive an annual inspection by a qualified person.
 - c. The ICC typically updates their standards every 4-6 years.

4. What is required for this annual inspection?
 - a. “all folding and telescopic seating shall be inspected to evaluate compliance with the manufacturer’s installation and operational instructions, including an inspection during the opening and closing of such seating”
 - b. “An inspection tag or plaque shall be installed in a visible location to document annual compliance inspections. The tag or plaque shall include the following”:
 1. Manufacturer
 2. Date of installation of tiered seating
 3. Seating capacity
 4. Name of inspector
 5. Date of inspection

5. Who is a considered a qualified person per this standard?
 - a. While this standard doesn’t specifically identify who is considered a qualified person, it makes clear the person who is performing the inspection be well versed in the ICC guidelines as well as have an clear understating of the manufacturer’s installation and operation instructions. Furthermore, the US Consumer Safety Product Commission in their Publication 330 11 regarding bleachers recommends follow-up inspections and maintenance. Their standard calls for quarterly inspections (Can you believe that? Quarterly Inspections!) to identify any structural damage or degradation that could compromise safety and an inspection at least every two years by a licensed professional engineer, registered architect or company that is qualified to provide bleacher products and service.

6. Why should we consider using an outside vendor for our bleacher inspection and maintenance?
 - a. When considering that the question the real question should be: Do you, as the School District, really want to take on that risk? What is the cost for the District if someone is to be hurt or worse on your tiered seating?
 - b. By hiring a contractor such as NWAP, who is an expert in the field, you're gaining a trusted partner, insuring that the inspection and maintenance is completed correctly, your ICC documentation will be completed accurately and, ultimately, you're greatly reducing your liability exposure.
 - c. In addition to what was previously mentioned, there are other benefits for hiring an experienced team - such as finding and repairing fatigued parts before they break, reduced down time (I imagine none of you wants the call saying the bleacher don't work and hour or two before a game), less emergency repair calls and increasing the life span of the seating with proper maintenance.
 - d. Ultimately to insure safe seating it is a team approach. We like to create a partnership with the school districts to make this happen. The districts can visual inspections on the seating on a quarterly basis per the Commission standard and NWAP then comes in on an annual basis to take on the maintenance and the ICC inspection.

7. Who monitors compliance and is compliance tracked?
 - a. Ultimately compliance and records of compliance are your responsibility to track.
 - b. Where compliance becomes a big issue is when an accident or incident does occur and building code officials and insurance companies want to see documented history of bleacher inspections.
 - c. Since accidents involving bleachers and grandstands are unfortunately common I imagine there will be tighter regulations surrounding inspections in the coming years.

8. Is there a difference between an inspection and maintenance?
 - a. An inspection of the seating is simply a visual inspection of structural supports, any moving parts, handrails, seats, footboards, motors, wheels, tracks, specifically to look for irregularities or wear. In our experience, inspection alone does not go far enough, maintenance is far more in-depth. You simply cannot tell for sure if nuts or bolts are loose unless you put a wrench on every one of them and make sure they are tight. It sounds like a small thing but it is very important.

9. Have these regulations made bleachers and grandstands safer?
 - a. The short answer is yes, however, there is more work to be done. Currently there are approximately 10,000 incidents annually based on CPSC's accident records. I believe with focused attention by the districts and regular inspection and maintenance, these numbers of incidents can be greatly reduced.

10. Based on your experience doing inspections and maintenance what common issue do you see?
 - a. It is not uncommon for our team to encounter bleachers that aren't moving in or out straight. This can be a result of lack of cleaning under the bleachers - such as a pen or pencil in the path of a drive wheel. It can also be a more serious issue such as a damaged or broken row lock, a failed drive motor or even a bent structural component.

11. As a follow-up question what other concerns do you have related to bleacher or grandstand safety?
 - a. A trend for the past few years has been kids jumping in unison on the tiered seating during games. This puts a tremendous amount of stress on the bleachers or grandstands by increasing the loads on support structures and seats substantially. I witnessed this first-hand during a playoff game last season. I literally could see the bleachers flexing under the stress. This action can compromise the structural support of the seating.
 - b. During our inspections of grandstands in the last year we have found a few in which some of the large diameter bolts affixing the structure were loose as a likely result of the kids jumping on the grandstands. If enough of these bolts were to be loose it could cause a catastrophic failure. In fact, a few years ago a grandstand failed at a school in central Washington for these very reasons. Fortunately, no one was hurt but the story did make it into the local newspaper. What district wants that kind of publicity? Where people question your commitment to safety?

12. Do older bleachers or grandstands need to be replaced or retrofitted to meet current codes and are they required to have ADA seating?
 - a. The existing bleachers and grandstands are typically grandfathered in based on the codes that existed at the time of their installation which also applies to ADA seating.
 - b. I think it is wise to take a look at your older seating and considered how they can be made as safe as possible. In addition, make sure that there is some reasonable accommodation for ADA.

13. In addition to working on bleachers what else does NWAP do?

- a. NWAP is focused on safety, in addition to the bleachers, we can help service and maintain basketball backstops, divider curtains and operable partitions. If you bring us in to work on your bleachers, while our crew is on site, we're looking up at your backstops and divider curtain just to make sure we don't see an unsafe condition. Safety is our top priority. Ultimately, we want to be your complete gym maintenance solution, where we are maintaining your tiered seating, gymnasium equipment and operable partitions.
- b. In addition, if you are interested in adding or replacing any of these systems, we can help you with that as well.

References:

1. ICC 300-2017
2. 106th Congress 1st Session H.R. 836
3. U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Pub. No. 330 000011
4. Trident Member Argo Group: Bleacher Safety Guidelines
5. Wenatcheeworld.com: New Apple Bowl bleachers fail again Sept 19, 2016