



# Risk Management Considerations for Public Skating

**A** 40-year-old female was injured while practicing figures during an unsupervised adult public skate. A person skating backwards, against the flow of skaters, collided with the female skater. The accident resulted in a significant head injury and permanent disability to the female skater. A lack of supervision was alleged to have contributed to the claim. The claim payout was \$1,150,000.

## Factors that Can Increase the Likelihood of a Claim:

- Conflicting uses allowed during public skating.
- Poor ice conditions during the skate.
- Deteriorating ice conditions during the skate.
- Dirt or debris on the ice surface.
- Unruly patrons

## What is Public Skating?

Public skating is a leisurely skating program open to anyone, of any age and skill level. Every municipality tailors the skate to meet the needs of their community.

## Managing the Risk

### Ice Maintenance & Inspections

- Make sure the ice is inspected and repaired prior to the skate. Pay specific attention to ice depth, goal areas and net peg holes. Provide your concerns to the ice resurfacing operator immediately.
- Do not allow skaters on the ice until the resurfer is off the ice and the access doors are secured.
- Make sure there is no debris on the ice before and after the flooding process.
- Evaluate the boards, glass and any other area that the public has access to for poor or dangerous conditions.
- Inspections should be documented, including any repairs or maintenance completed.
- All hazards found during inspections should be reported immediately.
- Document that all inspections and tests were conducted.
- Remind skate patrol staff to continually check for deteriorating ice conditions during the skate and to take appropriate measures to repair immediately.

- Keep the ice surface well lit during public skating sessions.
- Remember your ice load capacity.

## On-Ice Supervision

The Ontario recreational Facility Association (ORFA) recommends that public skating programs have the following on-ice supervision:

- On-Ice Patrol to Skater Ratio:
  - 1 Skate Patrol 1 to 59 persons
  - 2 Skate Patrol 50 to 119 persons
  - 3 Skate Patrol 120 to 160 persons
- All on-ice supervisors should wear a helmet, safety vest and skates.
- All on-ice supervisors should carry a whistle for control purposes.
- Use a logbook to record public ice skating events. All acts of vandalism, unruliness, violence or general concerns must be recorded.
- Complete accident reports for all injuries.
- Complete incident reports for all unruly behaviour or patron eviction.
- Create and adopt a policy and procedure to govern unruly persons. Train your staff on how to follow this procedure.
- Adopt a zero tolerance policy for verbal/physical abuse by patrons to staff.
- Follow your “unruly persons” policy and procedure.

## Signage

- Rules of Conduct signs are a positive risk management tool and must be posted in a highly visible area to achieve their full potential.
- Safety signs should be posted around the rink.
- Consider posting the Rules of Conduct on your website.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say. Enforce your rules.

## Sample Rules of Conduct

- No food or drink on ice surface.
- No horseplay/games.

- No skating backwards.
- No figure skating maneuvers.
- No erratic/excessive speed skating.
- No balls/pucks/chairs/pylons/strollers/sticks or any other item that might interfere with the safety of any skater while on the ice surface.
- No headsets, earphones, cell phones or hand held electronic devices are to be used while skating.
- Carrying of children is not permitted on the ice surface.
- No sitting on the boards.
- Skate with the direction of all skaters.
- Skaters are required to conduct themselves appropriately at all times.
- Alcohol is prohibited.
- Helmets are strongly recommended.
- Location of nearest telephone - 911 is a free call.
- Children should be supervised.
- Respect and listen to the Skate Patrol. They are there for everyone’s safety.
- Skate guards must be worn in un-matted areas of the facility.

## Skating Aids

- No person should go on the ice surface during any public skating program unless on ice skates.
- Use of any skating aids such as chairs, pylons, strollers or any other item which might interfere with the safety of any skater while on the ice surface should not be permitted during public skating programs under any condition.
- Educate your staff and the public when “Learn to Skate” programs are held.

## Wheelchairs

- For the safety of all involved, designate a specific area for wheelchair use (close to the boards) during your public skate.
- Wheelchairs must not interfere with the flow of the skaters.
- People accompanying those with a wheelchair must wear skates on the ice and be a skilled skater.
- For the safety of all skaters a wheelchair shall have its wheels cleaned prior to going on the ice surface as to not track debris or dirt onto the ice.

## Other Considerations

1. Divide public skate programs into:
  - Public Skating – offered to everyone.
  - Family Skating – for families only.
  - Adult Skating – adults over the age of 18.
  - Mature Adult Skating – adults over the age of 50.
  - Each will require its own set of rules.
2. Create public skating announcements over your PA system reminding patrons of the rules governing the public skating session. Repeat the rules a couple of times during the session for late arrivals. Remember to mention the points of egress in the event of an emergency.
3. Understand your governing legislation – *Occupational Health & Safety Act*; Human Rights Code.
4. Consider the scheduled ice events that precede the public skate. Figure skating or hockey use can leave the ice in poor condition. Allow appropriate time to repair the ice.
5. Emergency evacuation procedures – post them for the benefit of the user and make sure all staff are trained in your procedures. Staff training should be done regularly so that staff are prepared to act during the emergency.
6. Defibrillators – make sure they are accessible and staff are trained.
7. Perform regular inspections of your facilities to make sure they are safe for public use.
8. Keep your sidewalks and parking lots plowed, shoveled and free of ice.
9. Make sure your floors and mats are safe for the public.
10. Remind patrons that their personal belongings are their responsibility – not yours.
11. It is recommended that all public skating events be supervised.