

## Inspecting our equipment

A question I often get is how often should I be inspecting my (fill in the blank)? As Gymnastics Club owners, coaches, or gymnasts we're reminded to inspect the spin locks on the bars before mounting. Or inspect the cables on the bars before starting the class. A myriad of inspections is required on a regular basis, but no one ever tells us exactly how often or when. We get our car inspected annually because the Department of Motor Vehicles tells us to. We have our fire extinguishers inspected regularly because the Fire Marshall tells us to. We even get our pulse checked because our doctor, trainer, or treadmill tells us to, but no one tells us when to inspect our gymnastics equipment.



As the owner of a family entertainment center (FEC) which is considered a miniature amusement park, I learned quickly of the rules of inspection surrounding that industry. An FEC can range from bounce house to a go cart facility to batting cage. Although inspection rules vary by state and country, Pennsylvania, my home state, is a leader in FEC safety and is therefore a leader in inspections rules. Some of the rules are:



- Inspects all inflatable rides every time they are inflated
- Rides must be inspected by a certified state inspector
- All enclosed inflatables (bounce house, slide, etc) are considered rides
- Only purchase inflatable from companies that are registered and approved by the state.
- Keep up to date records of all inspections
- Keep a service log on all amusements.

Perhaps all of this sounds logical and acceptable to you if you were operating a roller coaster, but would you follow the same procedures for an individual bounce house for 5-year-olds? It became a little more complicated for us when I learned that our trampoline game "Spaceball" is considered to be an amusement ride by the State of Pennsylvania. Long story short, I got it registered and we have it inspected and attended. By the way, every ride, moonbounce or amusement is required to have its own dedicate trained attendant for all hours of operation.

I tell you this to help you understand that sooner or later there will be community imposed regulations that tell us not only when to inspect our equipment but how and when we can use our equipment. I don't suppose the first person that opened a business around bounce houses considered that one day they would require state inspections, and I don't suppose the most gymnastic club owners are fully prepared for the day when the state comes in to inspect our bars, mats, and pits..... but is coming and it could be sooner than you think.

I believe we should prepare for the inevitable by getting our procedures in order. Aside from the fact that soon or later we will be required to have an inspection system, we should do it because it the right

thing to do and the best way to keep our gyms safe. So, if you don't have your own procedures, here is my top 5 list of inspection procedures.

1. Have a daily inspection with written report for all major apparatus and surrounding mats in your gym.
2. Keep an equipment repair log on all major apparatus with pictures of each piece of equipment



3. Keep a cleaning and fluffing log on all loose foam pits. (this may be the first thing that gets mandated inspections)
4. Maintain an up to date list of all the equipment and mats in your gym with manufacturer, model #, and in service date.
5. Hire an outside professional to inspect your equipment at least once a year.



If we start sharing and standardizing our procedures, then when outside regulators come to our business, hopefully they will find that we have good procedures and all that they will do is mandate registration of the procedures that we already have in place.

Let's start inspecting now.

Steve Cook, AAI