Bleacher Safety Guidelines

In response to injuries and fatalities from falls from bleachers, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has issued *Guidelines for Retrofitting Bleachers*. Many states and municipalities have adopted legislation requiring bleachers to meet standards in currently adopted editions of **NFPA 101 Life Safety Code** and the **International Building Code (IBC)**.

To promote greater safety at municipal facilities, an assessment of all bleacher systems should be conducted. This assessment should include an inventory of each bleacher's location, construction type, and size. Many existing bleachers are older and may not have been properly maintained or updated. Evaluations should include the structural integrity of the bleachers and any openings between seats, footboards, and guardrails. Based on this assessment, a determination should be made whether each bleacher system should be **retrofitted, remodeled, or replaced** to eliminate safety hazards. Additionally, regular inspections of all bleachers by trained personnel should be conducted and properly documented.

Per CPSC's *Guidelines for Retrofitting Bleachers*, the summary of retrofit recommendations is as follows:

- Guardrails should be present on the backs and open ends of bleachers where the **seat, footboard, or aisle surface is 30 inches or more above the ground**.
- The top surface of the guardrail should be at least **42 inches above the leading edge** of the seat, footboard, or aisle.
- When bleachers are adjacent to a wall that is at least as high as the recommended guardrail, a guardrail is not needed if a **4-inch diameter sphere cannot pass** between the bleachers and the wall.
- Any opening between components of the guardrail, or under the guardrail, should prevent passage of a **4-inch sphere**.
- Openings between seating components (footboard, seat, or riser) should prevent passage of a **4-inch sphere** where the surface is 30 inches or more above the ground and could allow a fall of 30 inches or more.
- The preferred guardrail design uses **vertical members** as infill between top and bottom rails. Openings that could provide a foothold for climbing should be limited to **1.75**

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inches maximum. Ladder-like patterns should be avoided. If chain-link fencing is used, the mesh should be **1.25 inches square or smaller**.

- Aisles, handrails, non-skid surfaces, and other features that assist access and egress should be incorporated where feasible.

- Bleachers should be inspected at least **quarterly** by trained personnel, with problems corrected immediately and records maintained.

- A **licensed professional engineer, registered architect, or qualified bleacher company** should inspect bleachers at least every two years and provide written certification that they are fit for use.

A copy of CPSC Publication No. 330, *Guidelines for Retrofitting Bleachers*, is available at http://www.cpsc.gov or by calling the CPSC Hotline at 1-800-638-CPSC (2772).

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