

Guide to Public Skating Management & Supervision

(for Ice Arena Owners/Operators)



ISI



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Ice Sports Industry

GUIDE TO PUBLIC SKATING MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

for Ice Arena Owners/Operators

This manual is published by the Ice Sports Industry (ISI), reflecting experience from many sources. This manual should not be considered a full and complete treatment of the subject, but rather a report from a recognized source. It is the purpose of the manual to make current information on ice skating and instruction conveniently available.

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The Ice Sports Industry would like to thank the Metropolitan Ice Rink Managers Association (MIRMA) for their previous work and contribution to this manual.



**Guide to Public Skating
Management and Supervision
*for Ice Arena Owners/Operators***

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Introduction and Overview

The Rink Guard (also referred to as the Skate Guard or Ice Monitor) is one of the most important positions in the ice arena. In recent years, this position has evolved into one that encompasses safety, entertainment, customer service and education.

The purpose of this manual is to assist and familiarize ice rink owners and operators with the many important responsibilities required of the Rink Guard position. This manual presents a general overview of the role and should not be considered a full and complete treatment of the subject, but rather a report from a recognized source. It is the purpose of this manual to make available current information on good practices in ice skating rink and public session management.

The guidelines presented herein are just that – guidelines. This manual contains procedures and sample forms as well. These forms are included as suggestions or samples only. You should be aware that laws vary substantially from state to state, and it is recommended that you consult your attorney or insurance agent prior to using any of the forms or procedures.

The Role of the Rink Guard

The majority of customers in most ice arenas are introduced to the facility and your company through public skating. A customer's experience at one of your public sessions may determine whether they return to your arena and potentially engage in ice skating or hockey as a lifetime sport. It is of paramount importance that every arena owner and manager engage in safe and entertaining practices during public skating hours.

The role of the Rink Guard has evolved greatly through the years. No longer is the Rink Guard just the enforcer of rules during a public skating session. Today, the Rink Guard has become a customer service professional, an administrator, an entertainer, a teacher and essentially an ambassador of your company.

Public Relations

From the moment a patron enters the facility, public relations is vital. No matter how brief the encounter, (i.e., paying admission, receiving skate rentals, buying a refreshment, etc.), public relations and promoting a safe and fun environment are essential responsibilities of all ice rink staff.

What are public relations? Promoting goodwill between the rink and the public is the true meaning of this phrase as it pertains to the role of the Rink Guard. How the public is greeted, how skates are fitted, how patrons are assisted on the ice, how their questions are answered – all of these actions play an important role in good public relations.

Often the Rink Guard is the first or one of the primary points of contact for your customers. In fact, the interaction with your Rink Guards and front desk staff will likely have a much greater impact on the overall customer experience than any manager might have. While the primary job of the Rink Guard is still the enforcement of rules and the maintenance of a safe skating environment, he/she must also have excellent customer service and communication skills, be able to act as a teacher at times, have the ability to entertain your customers and be capable of handling an emergency situation. When hiring for these positions, you must find mature, responsible and outgoing people who you can train to be the face of your arena.

Hiring

Before beginning any hiring process, you should write a job description. The job description should be detailed and should also mention the qualities you are looking for in a Rink Guard. The job will require the candidate to work nights, holidays and weekends. Candidates should have, or be encouraged to obtain, certifications in CPR and first aid. The arena should offer its own classes in emergency procedures, first aid and CPR during the year to refresh staff on how to conduct themselves in emergency situations.

Included below is a sample job description as a guideline:

ABC Arena seeks mature, responsible team players to supervise the activities of the arena during public skating sessions. Successful candidates will ensure the safety of customers on public skating sessions, have excellent customer service and interpersonal skills, be outgoing and approachable, and have strong skating skills. Certifications in first aid and CPR are a plus as well as a high energy level. Candidates will work nights, holidays and weekends.

Managers should be selective in who they hire as Rink Guards to ensure that the candidates will succeed following proper training.

The Training Process

Once hired, candidates should not just be thrown onto the ice to learn by trial and error on their own. An arena manager should have a specific training process for Rink Guards so that a new employee will have a successful experience. Supervisors for a public session have many responsibilities. A training program should be designed with specific responsibilities they may be encountered and it should include classroom time, off-ice observation, shadowing with a more experienced staff member and hands-on experience with real-time evaluation by managers and peers. Written exams also serve as an effective training tool. We have presented a sample exam and off-ice evaluation form in Appendix A, beginning on page 10.

During the education process, managers should stress the importance of uniforms, punctuality, grooming and customer service. Not only should the rules be explained, but also the reasoning behind all rules should be expanded upon in depth.

General Guidelines for Public Skating Sessions

Arena Managers need to assess their arena's needs and determine guidelines for public skating sessions. Considerable thought must be put into the times, frequency and length of public skating sessions. To be successful, public sessions should be regularly scheduled throughout each season, and the schedule should rarely, if ever, change during a season.

The schedules should be posted in your arena and on your website. All arena staff members should be familiar with the week's public skating schedule.

Once a schedule is determined, each arena must decide how the arena will be set up for public skating. Some questions to be answered include:

- How many cones will be placed on the ice to determine the skating track? (*The number and location of cones is important as well as explaining how cones can be adjusted during the session to improve ice quality and safety.*)
- Will there be a designated beginner/walker area?
- Where will patrons enter and exit the ice?
- How will music be played? Are the selections age-appropriate for the session? Are there certain types of music that should never be played?
- Does the ice need to be resurfaced during the session? If so, when?
- What will the arena use as a proof of purchase for customers, (i.e., badges, wristbands, stamps, etc.)?

Arena Rules and Enforcement

Certain basic rules of conduct must be enforced during the session. The "Skaters' Code of Conduct" should be posted conspicuously in the arena and should be read aloud over the public address system during the session.

Included below is a list of rules that an arena can use as a guideline (each arena should adapt this list to their particular arena):

1. Skating in a manner that endangers or interferes with other skaters' safety or pleasure is strictly forbidden.
2. Roughness, excessive speeding or weaving through other skaters is prohibited.
3. No patron organized tag or games of any kind are permitted on or off the ice.
4. No more than two people may skate together.
5. No one is permitted on the ice without skates.
6. Skaters must keep moving while on the ice.
7. No figure skating or backwards skating is permitted, except in the designated area.
8. No eating, drinking or smoking is permitted on the ice surface.

9. Skaters are not allowed to carry children or secondary items such as cameras, handbags, etc., while skating.
10. Patrons must not sit on, lean over or leave articles on the dasher boards.
11. Exits are to be kept clear at all times.
12. No dogs or pets of any kind are permitted on the premises.
13. Incidents or malicious destruction are to be reported to a supervisor immediately.
14. No patrons-on-duty are allowed on the ice during resurfacings.
15. No skates are allowed in the bleachers.
16. Any disagreement with a patron who violates a rule must be referred to the manager or ice supervisor.
17. Throwing snowballs (or any other objects) is strictly prohibited.
18. Persons who appear to be under the influence of alcohol or other substances are not permitted in the arena. Refer to manager.
19. If a customer sees anyone violating these rules, they should immediately bring it to the attention of a Rink Guard or manager.

All Rink Guards should be familiar with these rules and must be vigilant about enforcing them. Rink Guards must also be consistent in their enforcement of the rules of the rink. Everyone must be treated uniformly with no exceptions. Inconsistency can develop into more of a control and public relations problem than a lack of enforcement.

When a violation of the rules occurs, Rink Guards should assume that patrons are not familiar with rink regulations and should politely request that the patron cease the violation of the rules. An explanation of why the regulation exists and is enforced will often be the only action required.

If a patron continues to deliberately violate the rule(s), the Rink Guard should request he/she to leave the ice for a specific time period (approximately five minutes).

If there is an additional violation by the same patron, he/she should again be requested to leave the ice for an increased time period. The Rink Guard should also advise the patron that further infractions will result in referral to a manager.

These discipline guidelines must be consistently followed, and it is important not to exceed this authority.

Guidelines and Tools for Rink Guards

Managers should schedule enough Rink Guards to accommodate the number of anticipated customers on a public session.

Rink Guards should bring to the ice (or have easy access to) any or all of the following:

- First-aid kit
- Microphone

- Whistle (to get customers' attention when they break the rules or in case of an emergency)
- Bullhorn (to communicate in the event of a power outage)
- Accident reports
- Flashlight (to help guide customers during a power outage)
- Cones
- Walkie-talkie (to communicate with management and office staff)
- Ice packs
- Gauze pads
- Latex gloves

Rink Guards should be easily identifiable on the ice with brightly colored uniforms that clearly identify them as arena employees.

At least one Rink Guard should be on the ice during or just after any resurfacing. At this time, the Rink Guard should inspect the ice for any defects, prepare the cones to be placed on the ice surface and ensure that all entrance doors are closed. Once the ice resurfacing is complete, the ice is frozen, the cones are set up and any required announcements have been made, the Rink Guard may begin letting skaters on the ice.

At the beginning of the session and following any resurfacing, a manager, supervisor or Rink Monitor should read aloud over the public address system the "Skaters' Code of Conduct." They can also mention the location of fire exits and announce any special events for that day's session or upcoming events at the arena. During the session, Rink Guards should never skate together, diligently and fairly enforce the rules, communicate and interact with customers, and conduct themselves as positive ambassadors of the arena.

The Rink Guard the Patroller of the Ice

The positioning of Rink Guards is very important. Emphasis should be placed on potential problem areas of the rink which include:

- Exits and entrances to the ice surface
- Center ice
- Two ends
- Sides used for congregating

To give maximum attention to the above areas, various positioning and patrol techniques are employed. These require the Rink Guard to skate backwards, forwards, around the outside edge, stand in corners and center ice, and at the four corner points of the skating "track." Often, it is very effective to have Rink Guards stand in key areas of the ice surface to more easily observe all activities.

At no time should any two Rink Guards be in the same location. Teamwork requires that the Rink Guards position themselves according to the needs of the ice session in progress. Since certain areas can be more demanding, Rink Guards should switch areas approximately every 15 minutes.

In some arenas, Rink Guards may also be stationed off the ice to have a different perspective on the session. These rink monitors should communicate with on-ice monitors via walkie talkie about any troublesome areas of the rink or about any issues with patrons on the rink.

The Rink Guard the First Responder

Rink Guards should be quick to check on any patron who has fallen. They should ask if the customer is okay and determine if assistance is needed. They should never help a customer up from the ice surface that they suspect may have an injury.

Rink Guards should be trained (and preferably certified) in first aid so that they can lend a hand in certain situations. Rink Guards must respond and react properly to incidents such as bleeding and render first aid until more highly trained personnel arrive. Fanny packs with rubber gloves, gauze pads, band aids, disinfectant and other basic first-aid supplies should be carried at all times by a Rink Guard. Managers should stress the importance of the use of rubber gloves in any situation requiring first aid.

Rink Guards also must be trained for other emergencies (i.e., fire alarms, power outages, bomb threats, etc.). They must be trained to remain calm and provide assistance when emergencies arise. For example, if the power goes out, he/she needs to slow all of the customers down and efficiently but safely escort them from the ice surface. He/she must then communicate with management to see what further action is necessary.

The Rink Guard the Ambassador

Rink Guards should be familiar with the various programs at the arena including learn-to-skate classes, learn-to-play hockey classes, leagues and camps. As ambassadors of the arena, they will often be asked questions about these programs. If they do not know the answer to a question, they should either find out the answer or direct the customer to the appropriate personnel for further assistance so that the question may be answered in a timely fashion.

The Rink Guard the Entertainer

Increasingly, customers are looking for more from their public session experience. They want value for their money and a reason to come back to your arena. Managers should work with staff and customers to develop value added experiences at public sessions. Many enjoyable activities can be planned with a little effort and little or no additional expense.

Games and Trivia Contests

To liven up the skating experience, Rink Monitors can run trivia contests for customers, play games, (i.e., Simon Says; Red Light, Green Light; karaoke, etc.), and lead scavenger hunts or skills demonstrations.

DJs and Dancing

DJs can also provide another great feature during public skating sessions. Many arenas have light shows with the DJ set up on the ice in order to interact with customers. DJs, with the help of the Rink Guard, can also help facilitate dance contests and other types of games. The Hokey Pokey, the Macarena and other fun dances can liven up your public sessions.

Free Skating Lessons

During times when public sessions are busy, skating coaches or junior instructors can be scheduled to offer free 15-minute group lessons for anyone interested. This will help customers have a positive skating experience and can be a selling point for your learn-to-skate program.

Non-Skating Entertainment

During holiday, weekend or other busy public sessions, other types of non-skating entertainment (i.e., face painters, balloon artists, caricaturists) can be hired at reasonable fees to provide “value added entertainment.” Remember that skaters and parents expect ice, skates and music to be provided. By offering extra, unanticipated forms of entertainment, you will exceed their expectations and, therefore, provide them with a superior experience.

The Rink Guard the Administrator

Certainly a whole class could be presented on filling out accident reports. Therefore, we will not go into detail on this subject. Some basics should be adhered to when completing accident reports:

- Rink Guards should be taught to complete accident or incident reports in a clear, legible and detailed manner.
- Management staff should be involved when the information about the accident or incident is obtained. It is preferable (but not always practical) for a manager to complete the accident report.
- All accident reports should be reviewed shortly after the accident or incident occurs for legibility, detail and correct information.
- Whenever possible, witness statements should be taken as well as employee statements.
- The ice should be inspected when an accident occurs.
- Statements that the injured party makes about the accident should be written down.
- Names of staff on duty at the time of the incident should be written down.
- The nature of an injury should not be speculated. (For instance, do not state, “Injured has a broken leg.” Instead, state, “Injured has pain, discomfort and swelling in their right leg.”)
- The date, time and location of the accident should be noted.

For more information, refer to the sample accident report provided in this manual.

Summary

Public sessions should be an important feeder program for your arena. In this day and age of cell phones, video games, reality TV and a general lack of activity, now, more than ever, you must make your public sessions safe, fun, entertaining and enticing for customers. A properly trained staff of Rink Guards who are mature, responsible and personable will go a long way toward making public sessions enjoyable and productive.

This manual presents guidelines that may, or may not, be successful at every arena. If ownership and management invest the time and effort to find quality Rink Guards and properly train them, then they should be able to achieve their goal of providing safer and more enjoyable public skating sessions for all of their customers.

Appendix A

SAMPLE RINK GUARD EXAMINATION

1. Explain the term Public Relations and how it applies to Rink Guards:

2. What are two primary functions of the Rink Guard?

3. A Rink Guard's area of responsibility includes:
(Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entire property | <input type="checkbox"/> Complete ice rink facility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ice rink surface | <input type="checkbox"/> Exits and entrances to ice |

4. Rink Guards must be _____ in application of facility rules.

5. You are asked by a patron about taking skating lessons. What is the correct approach?
(Check to indicate your action.)

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Explain lesson program. | _____ |
| b. "I don't know. You'll have to check with the manager." | _____ |
| c. "I'm not sure, but the cashier may know." | _____ |
| d. Briefly explain program, and direct specific questions to skating director. | _____ |

6. A Rink Guard sees a skater throwing a snowball on the ice. This is the third offense for this patron. Explain how you would handle this situation.

7. Complete the following skating rules:

- a. _____ snowballs _____
- b. _____ bleachers _____
- c. _____ during resurfacing.
- d. Exits _____
- e. _____ dasher boards.
- f. _____ eating, drinking or smoking _____
- g. _____ backward skating _____
- h. _____ keep moving.
- i. _____ without skates.
- j. _____ two people _____
- k. _____ tag _____
- l. Roughness _____

8. Eight rules were listed for Rink Guard employees. List four below.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

9. Name the four most common problem areas on the ice that require special attention from the Rink Guards during public sessions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

10. Being the only Rink Guard on the ice, list areas you would cover to maintain maximum crowd control:

SAMPLE RINK GUARD ON-ICE EVALUATION FORM

Applicant's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

First Aid Certification/Card: YES NO Expiration Date _____

CPR Certification/Card: YES NO Expiration Date _____

SKATING SKILLS:

Graded 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good, 5 = excellent

Forward in clockwise direction _____ Counterclockwise _____

Backward in clockwise direction _____ Counterclockwise _____

Forward Snowplow stop _____ Hockey Stop _____

Right T-Stop _____ Left T-Stop _____

TOTAL _____ (Maximum 40)

EXAMINERS:

_____ Title _____

_____ Title _____

Date _____

ANSWER KEY TO RINK GUARD EXAM

1. Public relations is important to the Rink Guard because many times a Rink Guard will be the person who most often comes in direct contact with the public for the longest period of time. How you greet someone, fit their skates, assist them, etc. will affect the patron's perception of the arena and the services it has to offer.
2. a. Patron safety
b. Patron enjoyment
3. Ice rink surface, ice rink facility and entrances/exits
4. Consistent
5. d. Briefly explain program, and direct specific questions to skating director.
6. Skater would have been warned and asked to sit out the first two times, and if he/she has still not obeyed, by the third time, notify the rink manager on duty.
7. a. Throwing **snowballs** is not permitted.
b. Patrons are not allowed in the **bleachers** with skates on.
c. No patrons are allowed on the ice **during resurfacing**.
d. **Exits** are to be kept clear at all times.
e. Patrons must not sit on, lean over or leave articles on the **dasher boards**.
f. No **eating, drinking or smoking** is permitted on the ice surface.
g. No **backward** skating or figure skating is permitted, except in designated area.
h. While on the ice, skaters must **keep moving**.
i. No one is permitted on the ice **without skates**.
j. No more than **two people** may skate together.
k. No **tag** or games of any kind are permitted on or off the ice.
l. **Roughness**, excessive speeding or weaving through other skaters is prohibited.
8. a. All Rink Guards must be in complete uniform at all times.
b. Rink Guards are polite and courteous no matter what the difficulty.
c. Enforce rules.
d. Over-socializing during duty hours is prohibited.
e. Be on the ice (by entrance ways) five minutes before the session is to begin.
f. Breaks are given at the discretion of manager on duty – not at your decision.
g. Keep the lobby and locker areas clear.

9.
 - a. Exits and entrances
 - b. Center ice
 - c. Two ends
 - d. Sides used for congregating

10. Skate backwards, forwards, around the outside edge; stand in corners and center ice, and at the four corner points of the skating “track.”

Sample Accident Report

Rink Name _____ Address _____
Person Completing Report _____ Date _____

Date of accident _____ Time _____ Name of injured _____ Age ____ Sex ____ Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____ Phone _____
--

If minor, were parents notified: Yes No *If minor, were parents present* Yes No

Event taking place on ice at time of accident _____ Name of person notified _____ Relationship _____ Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____ Phone _____
--

How did accident occur? (Describe in patron's words.)

Ice Resurface Time: AM PM
Type of Cut: Wet Dry
Skate: Own Rental Figure Hockey
Were skates inspected? Yes No
Condition of Skates: _____

Please mark on the diagram with an "X" where the accident occurred.
Rink Name or Number _____

Inspector signature _____ Was ice surface at point of fall inspected? Yes No Condition of Ice _____ Description of Inquiry _____ Type of Aid _____ Administered by _____ Taken to hospital? Yes No If yes, what hospital? _____ If not, what action was taken? _____ Did injured refuse treatment? Yes No If yes, reason for refusal _____

Number of staff members on duty at time of incident _____ Number of Ice Monitors in attendance _____ Approximate attendance _____ Name(s) of other person(s) involved in incident, if applicable _____
--

WITNESS:
Name _____ Relationship _____ Phone _____
Address _____ Comments _____

Signature of person who administered first aid _____
Signature of Manager _____

Additional Comments _____
Date of Report __/__/__



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