



Introduction to Football Goal Post Safety

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Introduction

During the last few years, several fatalities and serious injuries have occurred due to unsafe football goal posts. These accidents typically involve goals that have either toppled over or used unsuitable net hooks.

It's vital that we learn from these tragic incidents and strive to make football a safe sport, for players, officials and spectators.

The following guide is not intended to be a comprehensive safety guide, but a short introduction to some of the most important goal post safety issues to consider.

Anchorage

Correct anchorage is one of the most important elements of goal post safety.

Fatal accidents have previously occurred when a football goal with insufficient or inappropriate anchorage has toppled over. The impact of a falling goal is considerable so it is vital that goal posts remain securely in place whether they are in use or stored away. Under no circumstances should anybody be allowed to climb, swing or hang from the goal posts.

Freestanding football goals should be anchored at all times, according to the manufacturers' safety instructions. The number, placement and type of anchors required for each goal will vary between manufacturers as well as the type and size of goal. It's important to retain the manufacturers' safety information to ensure that it's adhered to at all times.

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Anchorage (Continued)

You may also wish to consider switching from freestanding goals to self weighted/integrally weighted goal posts. This newer type of goal features a weighted frame or backbar and allows the goal to become inherently stable.

It's also worth noting that ground conditions may play a significant role in the stability of a goal post. 'U' shaped ground pegs will become less effective in wet ground for example, so should only be used when there is evidence of their effectiveness under the worst ground conditions.

Storage

It's important to ensure that even whilst not in use, that goal posts are safely stored.

Goals that are normally socketed should ideally be moved to a secure location and dismantled. If this is not possible however, they should be laid flat in a secure area to prevent them from falling over. Socketed goal posts must not be left leaning against a wall or other object.

The FA recommends that portable goals should not be left in place when not in use, and either dismantled entirely or moved to a secure location that prevents unauthorised use. It's recommended that goals remain fully anchored, even whilst not in use.

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Regular Maintenance

All football goals should be inspected regularly to ensure their continued safe use.

Whilst inspections will vary between types of goal / location, typically these checks are for:

- Missing or loose bolts, clips, pins and fixings
- Correct/safe anchorage
- Stability in ground sockets or anchor points
- Broken/missing net fittings
- Damaged/worn nets
- Damage to the goal (chips, bent net supports etc)
- Identification and safety labels remaining intact and legible

Any goal found to be 'faulty' should not be used until the correct replacement parts have been fitted and checked, or if appropriate, the goal itself has been replaced.

It is good practice to record all the dates and information concerning regular checks and any maintenance that has been undertaken.

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Wooden Goal Posts

Whilst previously a common sight on football pitches across the country, wooden football goals have largely been replaced by safer and sturdier types of post. Any wooden football goals still in use today should be replaced as quickly as possible with metal or uPVC goals.

There are no BS/CEN safety standards to cover wooden football goals, but all those previously independently tested have failed strength and stability tests. It's highly unlikely that any wooden football goal would be able to pass such tests.

Homemade wooden football goals pose another risk, along with those that have been altered from their original size. The structural strength and stability of these goals can be highly questionable and should not be used under any circumstance.

By modern standards, wooden football goals offer poor strength, stability and with the potential for decay/rot, this type of goal should be considered dangerous and decommissioned from use as quickly as possible.

Metal Net Hooks / Cup Hooks

Metal net hooks/cup hooks were banned from use for the 2007/8 season onwards. This type of net hook poses a significant risk of injury to players and goalkeepers, with scratches, serious wounds and significant head injuries prompting the ban on their use.

Football goals featuring this type of net hook (on any part of its frame) should ideally be replaced, or Velcro net straps or more modern plastic net clips/arrow hooks used instead to secure the net into place.

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