

## Safety Straps: For the Safety of All

The gym must be a safe place - right? Floors are regularly cleaned and inspected for damage, bleachers are lubricated and seats are tightened, and electrical and plumbing systems are subject to strict codes. But what about the stuff hanging over your head? Too often, basketball backstops are the most overlooked piece of equipment in your gymnasium. Once the backstop system is properly installed, it is the schools responsibility to inspect and maintain that equipment.

Pulleys, cables, components, limit switches and many other factors can contribute to failure of a suspended backstop. The one overriding factor in all falls is the lack of a fully automatic safety strap. The majority of existing units lack a fully automatic safety strap and aren't regularly inspected.



### What Happens if a Basketball Backstop Falls?

When you turn the key to lower or raise your basketball backstops, do you ever think about what would happen if a cable suddenly snapped? Many athletic directors and staff members who operate basketball goals are quite weary of the size of these units and keep a close eye on the unit when raising or lowering them. The movable portion of a backstop system can weigh close to 1,000 pounds and can be suspended 20 to 30 feet above the court floor. Together, when these systems fall, they can generate thousands of pounds of force on impact. It usually damages the backstop structure and facility. More importantly, it can also cause injury to spectators below. The type of damage that occurs when this happens can include damaged gym floors and bleachers, pipes damaging ceilings and walls, and even fractured ceiling beams.

### What are Safety Straps?

Safety straps are the seatbelts for your ceiling-suspended basketball goals. This piece of equipment acts as a backup so that if the cable ever failed, the safety strap acts like the seatbelt in your car and stops the backboard from falling.

Many older safety systems were not automatic and pinched the belt when triggered, requiring a manual reset of the unit. After having to travel 30 feet high to reset the unit a few times, many were just removed from the backstop and tied off to avoid having to reset them. Today, safety straps are fully enclosed, self-checking, reset automatically and work silently in the background.

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## Why Get Safety Straps for your Basketball Backstops?

There is no good reason for any movable backstop to not have a safety strap installed. Safely securing a piece of ceiling-suspended equipment will give you peace of mind for not only the safety of parents, coaches and student-athletes but also for your finances. Accidents happen sometimes besides our best efforts to prevent them. Having a proper safety system installed will provide a greater level of safety.

1. Gain peace of mind knowing that your goals are secured and players and fans are safe
2. Reasonably inexpensive-safety straps won't negatively impact your program's athletic budget
3. An "Insurance" type product-safety straps are worth every penny to protect what matters
4. Most insurance companies require safety straps in areas where goals hang above bleachers
5. Rarely need to be replaced-good until they catch a basketball goal

## Prevention!

If you do not already have a preventative maintenance plan for your basketball backstops, we suggest you plan one now. If you do not have the resources or expertise to perform an initial inspection or to provide preventative maintenance, there are qualified inspection and maintenance companies like Toadvine who can provide this service for you locally.

If you plan to perform this yourself, here are some suggestions for inspection and maintenance of your equipment:

- Install a safety strap or inspect your existing safety strap belt for any sign of wear and perform a pull test to test the units function
- Inspect and tighten bolts where needed
- Check all moving parts for signs of wear and replace as needed
- Lubricate moving parts where required
- Replace winch cable every two years or immediately if there is any visible wear
- Inspect and adjust limit switches

By following some of these general guidelines for better backstop safety, the next game in your gym can be a safe and enjoyable experience for all involved.

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