



# SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



## BLEACHERS & GRANDSTANDS BEST PRACTICES

Bleachers are used for viewing sporting events, graduations, parades, and other activities. Unfortunately, thousands of young children are seriously injured in falls from them each year. Bleachers should be as safe as possible.

Bleachers are categorized into different types depending on the facilities where they are utilized:

- Permanent / Stationary
- Portable / Movable
- Telescopic/Folding
- Temporary

When assessing fall protection requirements, bleachers fall into two other categories. Those meeting the standards for fall protection and those outdated (to be considered for upgrade) or retrofitted to meet current standards through retrofitting or replacement.

There are two guidance documents for assessing compliance with bleacher standards:

- [Grandstands and Spectator Bleachers: CPSC Retrofitting Bleachers](#)
- [ICC 300-2017 Chapter 5 Bleachers Book](#)

The International Building Code (IBC) adopted by New Jersey references the ICC 300-2017 Chapter 5 in new bleacher installations but not for retrofitting existing bleachers for renovations. However, facility stakeholders may consider using ICC 300-2017 Chapter 5 as best practices.

This ICC Standard addresses the unique concerns associated with bleacher seating. It handles new and existing installations of all types of bleacher seating, including fixed and folding bleachers intended for indoor, outdoor, temporary, and permanent use—this Standard wants to coordinate with the means of egress systems in the building codes.

Features of this updated edition include:

- Separated criteria throughout the Standard for outdoor open-air assembly seating and indoor smoke-protected assembly seating, including new definitions for each type.
- Revisions to load combinations to consider sway and partial loading for coordination with current industry standards.
- Improved provisions for stepped aisles regarding tread marking stripes and opening limitations.
- New requirements address transitions between stepped aisles around vomitories or where the stepped aisle continues onto a stairway at the beginning or end of an aisle.
- Requirements to add identification tags, including installation and inspection information.

It's recommended your agency follow these guidelines when considering retrofitting or replacing bleachers.

Frequent interim inspections can prevent incidents that place the municipality at risk. Identifying bleacher safety hazards easily is the best way to keep your bleachers in good condition. During your inspections, look for the following:

- Loose or missing hardware for cross-braces and frame connections
- Cracked or broken welds
- Solid anchoring or attachment to ground surfaces
- Bent or warped benches
- Sharp edges from damage
- Missing or damaged safety end caps
- Rust and signs of environmental stressors

[MSI Forms & Docs](#) includes a bleacher inspection checklist within the [Recreation Department Facility Hazard Identification Inspection](#).