

Windsor Essex Chatham-Kent Bowling Association



Thought it would be a good idea to write an article for bowlers about trying to stay safe while bowling within your bowling leagues. So many people seem to take bowling safety for granted these days. If you look around the leagues many bowlers are getting older so a serious trip or fall can seriously injure a bowler making them unable to bowl for months.

Many hazards that can affect bowlers

- Store **bowling equipment** behind the bowler area. No bowling equipment should be in walkways or in bowling area. No bowling equipment should be in seating areas. Store all bowling equipment in safe areas to avoid a trip hazard.
- Bowlers just dropping **equipment in the middle of the floor** saying I will be back in a minute.
- Bowlers place **multiple bowling balls on the rack**, so it becomes dangerous to get balls coming out of the ball return. Remind bowlers to properly secure their bowling balls when not in use to prevent them from rolling off the racks and causing injuries.
- Bowlers **switching into bowling shoes** then leaving regular shoes in the middle of the floor.
- Everyone likes to enjoy some **food and beverage** when bowling but spills can be a hazard when someone steps in one. Bowling shoes are designed to slide on the bowling approach. When food and beverage gets on the bottom of your shoes, it can become hazardous. To keep everyone safe it is important to be aware of any spills that occur by notifying everyone around you and then informing the centre staff to clean up the spill.
- **Pick up the bowling ball** with both hands so they are on the inside and outside of the ball. This will prevent fingers from getting smashed between two bowling balls while picking up a ball.
- The part of the **ball return** where the ball comes out can be a very dangerous area. There is a belt inside that could pull hair, loose clothing, jewelry, or your fingers could get stuck. Sometimes the ball return may jam. You need to notify staff immediately to prevent injury instead of attempting to resolve the issue by yourself.
- The **foul line** is the black line that separates the bowling approach and the lane. The lanes are applied with oil to protect the surface from friction that is created by the bowling ball. This oil is very slippery. If a bowler goes beyond the foul line and steps on the oil, they could slip and fall and get hurt. The oil may also get transferred from the bottom of the bowler's shoes to the bowling approach. This could cause the next bowler to go up and stick on these spots causing them to fall and get hurt.
- Take care when **stepping up and off the approach** as some centres have a slight step up to get on and off the approach.
- Educate bowlers about the **potential for collisions** on the lanes, especially when multiple bowlers are bowling simultaneously. Encourage bowlers to be mindful of their surroundings and maintain a safe distance from other players.
- Identify potential **tripping hazards**, such as uneven flooring, loose carpets, or extension cords, and encourage bowlers to watch their step and report any hazards they encounter.
- Highlight the importance of **proper lighting** throughout the bowling alley to ensure clear visibility and reduce the risk of accidents or falls.
- Raise awareness about the **potential distractions** on the lanes, such as loud noises, other bowlers' movements, or nearby screens. Advise bowlers to maintain focus and stay alert.
- Never back up after **delivering a bowling ball** – turn around and walk back. Once you have completed your throw, exit the bowling area so the next person can bowl.

- Promote good **bowling etiquette**, including waiting for the bowler in the adjacent lane to complete their turn before stepping onto the approach, to minimize the risk of collisions or disruptions.
- Remind bowlers to be aware of **potential allergens** in bowling shoes, such as dust or cleaning chemicals, and encourage proper hand hygiene after handling the shoes.
- Encourage bowlers to **warm up** properly before bowling to prevent muscle strains or injuries.
- Inform bowlers about the possibility of **pinsetter malfunctions** and the importance of notifying staff immediately to avoid any potential hazards.
- Identify any **restricted areas**, such as maintenance zones or equipment storage areas, and remind bowlers to respect these restrictions for their safety.
- Minimize undue **bowler stress** by doing the following:
 - Minimize loud noises
 - Be prepared to bowl when it is your turn.
 - Yield to bowlers returning to bowling area from the approach.
 - No balls in sitting areas.
 - DO NOT block walkways.
- When bad things happen **keep the person in place** until you are certain that they can move safely. Clean any debris or liquid from area. Contact the front desk for immediate help.

Just recently this season a league secretary at a bowling centre within our association was stepping over someone's equipment bag that was in the walking area between the bottom of the stairs and the seating area. Her foot caught part of the bag and down the secretary went. She was transferred by ambulance to the hospital. Injuries included cuts on left eyebrow and bottom of chin, a bruise under cheek bone, and she could not move her arm. The secretary had to be stitched up on the eyebrow and chin. She required x-rays on her shoulder/arm and a CT scan to the head. Due to the hospital cyber-attacks in our area, she was not seen for 8 hours and had to have a second CT scan before being released from the hospital 20 hours later. The secretary's current condition is the arm is still bruised from wrist to shoulder, still very little movement and unable to lift anything heavy. She will be unable to bowl for quite some time. This is all because bowling equipment was placed in a walking area where it should not have been.

At another bowling centre there is a narrow walkway along the lanes in front of the seating area where bowlers sit when they are not bowling. The secretary uses this narrow walkway to deliver the pay envelopes, the recap sheets, and the standing sheets on a weekly basis for each pair of lanes. For some unknown reason bowlers decided to place their bowling equipment in this narrow walkway. A bowler came up to the secretary to ask some questions then the secretary stepped forward and almost fell backwards over the equipment. Along this walkway the secretary almost fell on three separate occasions over different bowling equipment bags. An announcement was made to move this bowling equipment because there is a serious risk of injury. The following two weeks the bowling equipment was again back in this area still posing a serious tripping risk.

Placing bowling equipment in high traffic areas is a serious trip hazard. Someone is going to get seriously injured. There should be a separate equipment area designated in bowling centres to minimize these serious trip circumstances from occurring. I thought that it would be important to talk about staying safe while bowling because this affects everyone.

Think of it this way: **STOP AND THINK SO YOU CAN KEEP EVERYONE SAFE WHILE BOWLING.**

Web reference sites that were used to help prepare this article

Bowling Alley – Hazard Hunting: <https://hazardhunting.org/bowling-alley>

Bowling Safety PDF: <http://www.bowlersreference.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Bowling-Safety.pdf>

Kids Learn to Bowl web site: <https://www.kidslearntobowl.com/bowling-tip/bowling-safety/>

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