

# Using Facility Surveys

What exactly is the National Facility Survey, and how does it help? Many people think filling it out one time will “cover their bases” for years to come.

The truth is, you won’t know what has changed at your facility if you don’t look. Use the survey to look for concerns and ways to improve, even if facilities haven’t deteriorated. If an area has gotten worse, this is the perfect reminder to work on it now. The worst situation your league can face is fixing a hole in a field or a broken seat in your bleachers only after a child or parent is injured.

Some questions suggest changes to avoid injuries that have not and need not happen. Here are a few to consider:

If your concession stand is by homeplate and no one has been hit by a foul ball, count yourself lucky and consider overhead netting. People standing with their backs to the field don’t respond quickly. The same is true for fields that share a common foul line and spectator area.

Dark screening at backstop and center field is a major league upgrade at minor league prices. An inexpensive pitcher’s eye, the wood or fabric dark screening behind the catcher on the backstop, helps pitchers more quickly pick up a ball off the bat, and react. The batter’s eye, behind the pitcher in center field,

allows the batter to see the ball right out of the pitcher’s hand and react faster to avoid injuries from wild pitches.

Have you considered breakaway or quick-release bases? Studies continue to show leg, ankle and foot injuries – the majority of base runners’ injuries – can largely be avoided with these safety devices.



*Safety takes effort: (above) Adding protective tubing to fence tops reduces risk of players being injured reaching for home-run balls; (top right) bleachers are more safe with handrails and back guards; (below) ball returns help get balls into play safely; (bottom) and safety bases reduce sliding injuries.*



- Do you test light levels annually before each season?
- Do you have an electrician check lights’ electrical system for safety annually?
- Do you clearly separate parking areas from spectator areas?
- Do you have telephone access at all fields?
- Do you provide first aid kits to all teams?

These are all part of the Facility Survey. Taking a fresh look each year at your fields can help your league avoid accidents and injuries that you didn’t even know could happen. If you adopt these changes, you need *never* know.

## **Quick Hitters:**

- Do you use double first bases?
- Do you ground metal bleachers?
- Do you inspect wooden bleachers annually?
- Do bleachers have hand and back guard rails if required (see local codes)?
- Do you install warning tracks for all fields?
- Do you have fenced, limited access bull pens?
- Do you provide fence caps to protect fielders from injury on wire fence edges?

