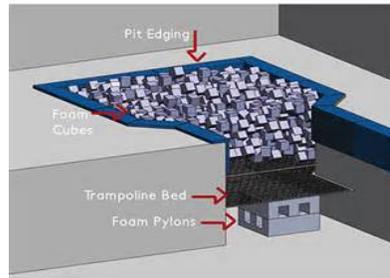




Pits and Pitfalls

The value of pits for training gymnasts and other acrobatic athletes has been agreed upon for decades. Pits have varied in design, construction, and use ever since they were first discovered in European gyms and the idea was brought to the United States. Depending on the use and coaching style, we have seen both loose foam and modular pits. The loose foam sizes, noodles, and tubes. Pits varied with net bottoms, foam bottoms. Most designs detractors.



Recently there have been studies into of dust from loose foam pits which retardants. The research has the pros and cons of loose foam pits. with new foams that will be totally non flammable but have no added fire retardants. Other issues within the discussion include possible harmful effects of the foam dust even if it doesn't contain fire retardants.

some potential harmful effects does or doesn't contain fire triggered numerous debates on Research is currently under way

There are many covered cubes, add alternate designed owners need to athletes. With that built, my discussion here will concentrate on those things that the gym owner can and should control.



groups working to offer potential solutions that include on cube covers, pit cleaning systems, air cleaners, and pits using air bags. While the research continues, gym take all precautions it insure the ultimate safety of the said, and assuming the pit was properly designed and

First and foremost is the condition of the pit. Condition includes proper padding around all edges of the pit, pit free of any obstructions including oversize pieces of foam shapes and random gym items. And is the pit full to the proper level. The success of loose foam pits is dependent on two things: the depth of the pit and the air pockets created by the spacing of the foam cubes. It is essential that the cubes are kept fluffed to create these spaces. This can be done by hand or mechanical devices that fluff the cubes. Either way this should be scheduled and completed regularly.



The older the foam cubes are, by the friction of two cubes Covered cubes reduce the friction and dust. There are the secondary market to cover existing cubes. Covers also cubes and ultimately protect your investment.

the faster they wear down. The dust in the pit is caused rubbing against each other. covers available on extend the life of the



Periodic cleaning of pits is a must. While this can be a tiresome task, it is

important on schedule intervals that the pit is totally emptied and vacuumed. Vinyl edge pads should be wiped down and carpet edge pads should be vacuumed.

The last but perhaps the most important part of pit care is making sure it is properly used. Gymnasts and coaches are usually very aware that the pit is not intended for intentional head first dives, but some times when the gym is used by outside groups or invited non gymnast participants, the soft inviting look of the pit

encourages inappropriate dives. To be safe there should be signs posted just like swimming pool where it's the shallow end of a painted "NO DIVING". Even if it seems obvious to you, post the sign!



With all the current research and discussion amongst the scientific community and the gymnastic industry advisory groups, there is no doubt that increased regulation is on the way. I imagine in the not too distant future the pits in gyms will require regular inspections just like swimming pools, commercial kitchens, amusement rides, and inflatable moon bounce houses. Taking good care of your pits will help keep the children safe and keeping a paper trail of your safety habits and procedures will help protect you and your business should it ever become a serious point of discussion. Stay safe!

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