

Slips At Public Skating

by CHARLES
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Use caution with 'walkers' on ice

Many rinks across the United States utilize walkers as a tool to help beginner skaters, and kids in particular, make their way around the ice. A walker can be a great confidence building device for new skaters, but walkers need to be carefully managed. Consider the following real-life events.

Mr. and Mrs. Newbie live in New England. They grew up skating as kids and skated with their own kids when they were young. The kids are all grown up now, and the Newbies, looking for a weekend activity, decide to return to their roots and go skating again. They head down to the local ice rink to attend a Saturday afternoon public skating session. Oh, by the way, Mrs. Newbie is a professional concert violinist, who regularly tours the world with a well-known orchestra.

Before they get on the ice, Mr. and Mrs. Newbie notice that there is a big crowd. It's December in New England, and apparently they are not the only ones with visions of on-ice fun on their minds. As they prepare to get on the ice, Mr. and Mrs. Newbie also notice that several skaters are using walkers. They assume that the walkers are being used to help people who are learning to skate.

As Mr. and Mrs. Newbie get on the ice and begin skating, they soon realize that the walkers are not just being used by new skaters, but they are also being used by several teenagers who do not need the support – they are competent skaters. Instead, the teenagers are racing around the rink using the walkers for fun.

Before Mr. and Mrs. Newbie have a chance to seek out a skate monitor, or



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even depart the ice, an incident occurs. Mrs. Newbie is skating along the length of the rink, when she sees from the corner of her eye two teenagers coming at her on an angle, wielding walkers. This startles Mrs. Newbie, who quickly attempts an evasive maneuver. As she does so, she falls on her right wrist and shatters it. Of course, Mrs. Newbie is right handed and uses her right hand as her bow hand when playing her violin.

Mr. and Mrs. Newbie subsequently file a lawsuit against the ice rink claiming that the ice was improperly supervised. In particular, they claim that the walkers either should not have been allowed on the ice, or that the walkers should have been restricted to a limited area of the ice. Guess what? They were right.

Tips for allowing walkers on ice:

- Limit the number of walkers on the ice and lower the limit for more crowded sessions.
- Set aside a particular area of the ice for walkers to be used.

- Be sure that skate monitors are vigilant in watching for misuse of walkers.

In the world of litigation, there is a saying that "you take the plaintiff as you find them." This means that if you happen to end up with a world-traveling concert violinist who fractures her dominant wrist, you are stuck with her, and the value of the case, given her unique skills and the severity of the injury in relation to those skills, will be affected. Some simple guidelines for the use of walkers and enforcement of those guidelines could have prevented the injury to Mrs. Newbie and could have saved one local ice rink from a serious lawsuit.★

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