

How Meet Officials Handle Equipment Failure and Malfunctions  
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Break downs and malfunctions of equipment during track and field meets can be greatly lessened by a good ongoing maintenance program prior to the start of the track season. Simple, easy to do maintenance tasks can go a long way toward preventing equipment failure and event delays.

1. Preventative maintenance items:
  - a. Hurdles
  - b. Standards
  - c. Pit fasteners
  
2. Equipment failure repair during competition:
  - a. Starting blocks
  - b. Jump standards fasteners
  - c. Broken standards
  
3. Events affected by equipment failure during competition:
  - a. Level of competition
  - b. Backup systems
  - c. Suspended competition

“If there is more than one possible outcome of a job or task, and one of these outcomes will result in disaster or an undesirable consequence, then somebody will do it that way.”

Sol's Law

Ron Whittaker  
Mexico, Missouri

## Murphy's Law at Track Meets

“Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.” This age old adage is not exempt when track and field meets are being held. Whether the meet is a middle school dual meet, or a state championship, equipment is being used that can break or malfunction.

Many break downs and malfunctions can be prevented by an ongoing maintenance program. Too often track and field equipment is put away at the end of the season until the start of the next season without proper maintenance.

Equipment failure and malfunctions can be as simple as a rake for the sand, or as complex as an electronic timing device.

### Preventative Maintenance Items

**Hurdles:** Separate the sliding action of the hurdles and wipe down the inside post with diesel fuel. Due to metal contact, oxidation, and dust and rain a drag producing slurry is often produced that makes the hurdles height setting harder to operate. Diesel fuel acts as a solvent to remove the slurry and leave a long lasting protective coating. 1 gallon of diesel fuel, 1 piece of shag carpet, and rubber gloves will treat the hurdles for an entire season. Check all fasteners for the hurdle gate for proper tension.

**Standards:** WD40 all threaded fasteners for the standards and check the tension on the pins for the crossbar. Rust can create stripped threads. Check for proper length pins (high school = 76mm, college = 55mm).

**Pits:** Replace and repair all jumping pit and pit covers connecting fasteners.

### Equipment Failures During the Meet

**Starting Blocks:** Usually at least 8 events may use starting blocks. Multiply for both male and female plus preliminary heats and this piece of equipment has a lot of use and are most likely to fail at the start of a race. Keep a 10MM wrench and 10mm fine thread fasteners in the repair kit. Also a set of fold up Allen head wrenches. Mark the left and right pedals.

**Standards:** Fasteners for standards. Stripped thread repair on fasteners. Wrap a few turns of fine steel wool around the exterior bolt portion for temporary repair until the event is completed. Some portions of the standards can be temporarily repaired with training tape and splints made of wood or metal.

### Events Results Affected by Equipment Failure

1. Discontinue the event – dual meet
2. Event put on hold until replacement or repairs can be made – district meet
3. Competitors are not penalized if their performance is affected by malfunction of the equipment

Rule interpreters pass this information on to their respective state rules interpreters and they in turn pass the information on to the coaches at their annual rules meetings.

**REMEMBER:** “Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.” Use preventative maintenance to lessen the chances for equipment to fail and be a time when Murphy’s Law doesn’t occur.