



AAC Publications

Bouldering Fall — Gap Between Pads

Arizona, Indoor Gym

I had traveled from out of state to visit a friend, and on February 14 I figured I'd check out the bouldering at a local gym. About an hour into my session, I slid off a slab problem about six to eight feet off the mats. When I landed, my right foot hit the pad and my left foot continued down until it hit the hard floor beneath the pad. My ankle rolled and tore a ligament. I inspected the mats, and there was an uncovered seam where two pieces of foam came together. I could stick my hand down into the gap between the mats.

ANALYSIS

This type of injury has serious long-term financial, vocational, performance, and quality-of-life costs. In May 2025, Fiatal wrote to ANAC: "An employee stated I was not the first person to be injured in this way and they recently had funding approved to redo the mats in certain sections of the gym. It's 13 months post-incident and my primary care made me pay for ten months of physical therapy. While I climbed 25 percent of days in 2023 and 2024 leading up to the accident, I have climbed less than one percent of days since then." (Source: Connor Fiatal.)

Images



Here we see a home gym mat configuration with plenty of gaps that could cause ankle injuries. While padding for a garage climbing wall is a personal choice, commercial gyms should provide gap-free coverage to prevent ankle injuries. For their part, indoor climbers should stay alert for potential hazards at the gym to avoid and/or report them. Eli Duke—Wikimedia

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