

High School Pole Vault - Pole Inspection Procedures

(Officials should check with their state high school association for specific guidance on inspections in their state; the following procedures are used in Colorado)

Weigh each athlete on a certified scale. Athletes must be weighed, with shoes, prior to every competition. If an athlete weighs 145.6, annotate 145.6 next to the athlete's name on the start list, since one manufacturer provides pole weight increments in decimals. During the weigh in, also check the athlete's uniform and undergarments (logos, colors, and compliance), excessive jewelry, and spike length.

Inspecting poles: Officials should take a **reasonable approach to inspecting poles**, but need to adhere to the following rules:

NFHS Rule 6.5.3, Note 2. Each state association shall determine its own procedure regarding coaches' verification.

NFHS Rule 3.10.1 The field referee or head field judge shall have jurisdiction over all judges in all field events; shall oversee the measuring, weighing and inspection of the implements and apparatus, including vaulting poles; check records; and see that the field events start on time and continue without delay.

NFHS Rule 6.5.5, Prior to warm-up, the field referee or the head field judge shall inspect each pole to be used in competition to verify that the poles are legal equipment, per Rule 6.5.3.

There is an inconsistency in the application of rules for pole inspections by officials from state to state and within each state. Some officials are disqualifying poles based on their personal interpretations and concepts while other officials do not inspect poles. If your state does not have specific guidance for inspecting poles, using the following guidelines prior to every competition should help ensure they use a legal pole on every jump and to protect the officials from any liability implications.

What makes a pole illegal?

NFHS Rule 6.5.4 Note: Altering the pole in any fashion renders it illegal. All poles, no matter how old they are, have either etchings, engravings, or embedded information indicating the length and weight rating when shipped from the manufacturer. If this information is not on the pole, it has been altered. Older poles that might not meet the specifications of today's rule can be recertified through the manufacturer.

Officials will check the following four specific items: pole length, pole weight, top hand hold band, and tape at the grip end:

1. Pole Length

All poles must be measured to determine if they have been altered (cut). Some poles are marked metrically, some have English/Imperial markings; and some have both. The chart below may be used to verify length and weight conversions from metric to English. At times a coach may have to file rough edges off the bottom of the pole to prevent further splitting to prolong the pole life. So, there could be a slight disagreement of one to two inches between the actual length and what is etched or embedded on the pole; this is considered reasonable. *If a pole has been cut or altered beyond the reasonable considerations, the pole is not legal.*

2. Pole markings - NFHS Rule 6.5.3 Note 1: Etchings, serial numbers, etc. that may appear on poles shall not replace the requirement of the manufacturer's pole rating of the minimum ¼ inch marking in contrasting color on each pole.

The etchings, engravings and serial numbers are used to verify the information on the top hand hold band. Sometimes the weight rating etching, engraving or embedded information may not match exactly to what is located on the top hand hold band. This is primarily an issue with Gill poles. In 2003 the Gill Company recalibrated the weight ratings on some poles which changed weight ratings by 5-10 pounds. When replacing worn out or unreadable top hand hold bands/labels on older poles, the weight rating on the new band/label may not match with what is etched on the pole. In this case officials need to understand that weight ratings etched on the Gill poles manufactured in 2003 and earlier may differ by as much as 5-10 pounds from the information on the new top hand hold bands/labels. According to the Gill Company, these poles have not been altered, just recalibrated and should be allowed for warm up and competition. Gill has published a letter reflecting these issues. This is also considered reasonable. If the manufacturer's weight rating is no longer visible or recognizable on or above the top hand hold band, the top hand hold band must be replaced. Using a magic marker or sharpie to write the weight rating on a top hand hold band does not satisfy this requirement. *If the original weight rating label or the replacement weight rating label does not otherwise match the etched/engraved information on the pole, with respect to the information above, the pole is not legal.*

3. Labels - NFHS Rule 6.5.3: The manufacturer must include on each pole: the pole rating that shall be a minimum of ¼ inch in contrasting color located within or above the top hand hold position; a 1 inch circular band indicating the top hand hold position with the position being determined by the manufacturer.

The placement of the top hand hold band varies with manufacturers, from approximately 6 inches from the top of the pole to the very top of the pole. The top hand hold band placement does not need to be an exact placement, *just reasonable*. Manufacturers have either engraved or embedded pole information at the top or bottom of each pole. Some manufacturers include pole information on the top hand hold bands/labels. You need to become familiar with how each manufacturer labels poles so you know where to look and how to find this information. When labels need to be replaced, encourage coaches to place the new label in a location that does not cover up the etched/engraved information and ensure the labels are placed on the correct pole. *If the manufacturer's top hand hold band is missing or unreadable, the pole is not legal.*

4. Tape - NFHS Rule 6.5.2: The pole may have binding layers of adhesive tape of uniform thickness on the grip end.

Simply check to make sure the tape at the grip end of the pole is uniform/smooth and provides no unfair advantage to the athlete.

English versus Metric Pole Length and Weight Comparisons

Length Comparisons:

Gill Products

Imperial	Metric
10'	310
10'6"	325
11'	335
11'6"	350
12'	360
12'6"	375
13'1"	400
13'6"	415
14'	425
14'6"	440
15'	460
15'6"	470
16'1"	490
16'5'	500
16'9	510

UCS Products

Imperial	Metric
10'8"	325
11'6"	350
12'1"	370
13'1"	400
13'7"	415
14'1"	430
14'7"	445
15'1"	460
15'7"	475
16'1"	490
16'5"	500

Weight Comparisons:

Pounds	Kilograms
80	36
90	40
100	45
110	50
115	52
120	54
125	57
130	59
135	61
140	63
145	66
150	68
155	70
160	73
165	75
170	77
175	80

Gill poles that are 10' long have a different rating scale

1 equals 70 pounds, 2 equals 90 pounds

Gill 10' poles

Number	Pounds
1	70
2	90
3	110
4	130

180	82
185	84
190	86
195	88
200	91
205	93
210	95