



## **NFHS GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOOTBALL LINE-TO-GAIN CREWS**

A four-person line-to-gain crew is preferable, consisting of an operator for the down indicator, two holding the stakes, and a clip person. The person responsible for the clip may also be requested to record penalties. No one on the line-to-gain crew should double as a ball person or any other function. If the line-to-gain crew consists of only three members, the person working the down indicator can perform most of the duties involving the clip while the person holding the trailing stake temporarily holds the down indicator (or vice versa). It is strongly recommended that the members of the line-to-gain crew be adults and wear distinctive vests or jackets, and/or hats furnished by home or game management.

The line-to-gain crew is part of the officiating crew and must remain impartial. They must be prepared to hustle and to follow any instructions from the Head Linesman. They should be reminded that they are not allowed to cheer, criticize the game officials, make any remarks relating to players and coaches, nor express opinions concerning any ruling or calls made by the game officials. They are not to communicate with the visiting team and may not use cell phones or other electronic devices while on the line-to-gain crew. Any problems or situations the line-to-gain crew encounters while performing their job is to be brought to the Head Linesman's attention. They are to be reminded it is the Head Linesman's responsibility to resolve the situation, not theirs. If members of the line-to-gain crew are unable/unwilling to perform their duties, the Referee and the home team coach/athletic director should be informed.

### **PREGAME DUTIES**

The line-to-gain crew shall meet the Head Linesman on the sideline opposite the press box at least 15 minutes before game time and also five minutes prior to the second-half kickoff. If an unofficial auxiliary down indicator is used, the operator shall meet the Line Judge on the press box side at the same time.

The Head Linesman shall make certain that the official line-to-gain equipment has been placed opposite the press box or on the designated sideline and that all are in good working order and conform to the rules. The Line Judge shall make certain that the unofficial auxiliary down

indicator is in good working order and is placed on the opposite side of the field from the official line-to-gain crew.

### **GAME PROCEDURES**

For kickoffs, the line-to-gain crew should be positioned well out of bounds near the receiving team's 30-yard line or near the 50-yard line for a free kick following a safety.

When a first down is declared, the Head Linesman goes to the sideline and marks the spot for the down indicator with his downfield heel. The line-to-gain crew shall move as quickly as possible to their next position, with the rear stake set behind the down indicator.

After the chains are set, the chain must be clipped at the intersection of the sideline and the 5-yard line nearest the trailing stake. Once the chain is clipped, it must be moved approximately six feet off of the sideline. The clip is a safety valve. If the chains are moved either in error or for safety reasons, the clip provides a reference point for the exact chain location.

Once the chains are moved away from the sideline, the down indicator is also moved six feet away from the sideline and is placed in front of the trailing stake so that the game officials' view of the down indicator is not obstructed. The lead holder is responsible to ensure the chain is taut at all times. When the trailing stake is set behind the box, the trailing stake holder should step firmly on the chain; that ensures the chain will be taut and that the trailing stake will not be displaced when the lead stake is pulled.

Following each down, the down indicator must be set at the location specified by the Head Linesman (the foremost point of the ball) and the down indicator should be changed to indicate the next down, as directed by the Head Linesman.

On plays going out of bounds near the chains on the line-to-gain crew's sideline, the line-to-gain crew shall drop the chains and down indicator in order to ensure player safety.

The line-to-gain crew shall not move or change the number of the down until signaled to do so by the Head Linesman. On long gains or after a change of possession, the Head Linesman shall wait for the Referee's signal before directing the chains to move. It is permissible for the Head Linesman to allow the line-to-gain crew to move on direct signal from the Referee. If the line-to-gain crew sees a flag and the Head linesman instructs them to move, they should notify the Head Linesman of the flag.

The line-to-gain crew shall not be allowed to slow the pace of play. If the line-to-gain crew is not ready once the Umpire has spotted the ball, the Head Linesman shall drop a bean bag to spot the location where the down indicator should be placed, and play should proceed.

Whenever the line-to-gain becomes the goal line, only the down indicator is required. The Head Linesman should provide a bean bag to the down indicator holder to be placed at the spot for reference in the event the down indicator is moved. The chains are no longer needed and are to be laid down safely out of the way. Only the down indicator shall be used during try attempts.

During measurements, the down indicator shall be placed on the sideline at the location of the front stake until either a new series is declared, or the chain is returned to its previous position.

Between the first and second periods and the third and fourth periods, the Head Linesman shall grasp the chain at the clip, the line-to-gain crew shall reverse direction and shall carry the chain to the location on the opposite side of the 50-yard line, as instructed by the Head Linesman.

**\*FINAL – 6-1-24**