

## Playground Inspection

*Playgrounds are great assets in a community. Besides providing opportunities for fun and exercise, they help children develop physically, socially, and intellectually. Unfortunately, each year over 200,000 children<sup>1</sup> head to the emergency room as a result of injuries on playground equipment, and over 75% of these injuries happen on public playground equipment.*

Areas to consider when providing playgrounds in the community include:

### **Age Appropriateness**

In selecting playground equipment bear in mind the age of the children who will be playing there. Locate equipment for very young children—ages 2 to 5—in a separate area, and make sure it offers additional support and safeguards. When choosing equipment, remember to accommodate children with a wide range of abilities.

### **Supervision**

Children often use playground equipment in unanticipated ways. When adults supervise children, they can help protect them by identifying dangerous situations and intervening. Refer to the Risk Communiqué “Playground Supervision Considerations” for more information.

### **Fall Surfacing**

Most playground injuries—nearly 70 percent<sup>1</sup>—are related to falls. The type of fall- absorbent material, the depth of the material, and regular maintenance are important factors in reducing the risk of injury when a child falls from the equipment. Refer to the Risk Communiqué “Playground Surface Material Selection” for more details on selecting the appropriate surfacing for your playground.

### **Maintenance**

Regular inspection of playground equipment and surface areas is an important way to support a safe play environment. Attached are two playground inspection checklists for your use:

- **The Public Playground Safety Checklist** is a concise form based on guidelines developed by the Consumer Product Safety Commission that can be used on an ongoing basis.
- **The Playground Inspection Checklist** is more detailed and provides a structure for documenting inspection dates, comments, recommended actions, and follow-up actions taken. This is a very good guide that can be used by a trained individual to observe and report potential risks at a playground.

## Playground Inspection

### **Public Playground Safety Checklist**

**Playground Site:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Inspected:** \_\_\_\_\_

Thorough inspections of the playground area and equipment should be performed frequently and regularly. If repairs cannot be made immediately, equipment should be removed from service until repaired.

The following are the **Public Playground Safety Checklist** guidelines as developed by the Consumer Product Safety Commission<sup>1</sup>:

- Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand, or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
- Check that protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
- Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
- Check for dangerous hardware, like open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.
- Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
- Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
- Look out for tripping hazards, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.
- Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
- Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.

Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure they are safe.

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#### References

1. *The US Consumer Product Safety Commission Public Playground Safety Handbook*

## Playground Inspection

Playground Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_

Playground Condition Inspected	Date Inspected	Comments	Recommended Action	Date Completed
Loose, damaged, unsecured or missing supports, anchors or footings				
Exposed footings				
Loose or missing nuts, bolts, or other connectors				
Broken or missing rails, steps, rungs, or seats; broken or missing guard rails on elevated equipment				
Bending, warping, rusting, or breakage of any component or component part				
Sharp edges or points due to wear or breakage				
Deformed hooks, shackles, rings, and links				
Lack of lubrication on moving parts				
Exposed mechanisms such as joints or springs that could result in pinch or crush injuries				
Splintered, cracked or deteriorated wood				
Cracks or holes in surfacing materials				
Trash in area, particularly glass or cans, litter, animal excrement				
Tripping hazards from roots, rocks, or ruts				

## Playground Inspection

Playground Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_

Playground Condition Inspected	Date Inspected	Comments	Recommended Action	Date Completed
Poor drainage areas				
Broken equipment				
Protective surface depth of less than 12 inches or in poor condition				
Evidence of vandalism				
Worn swing hangers and chains				
Exposed screws, tubes and bolts/missing protective end caps				
Slip-resistant materials in poor condition				
Chipped or peeling paint				
Lead paint				
CCA-treated wood				
No visible signage identifying age-appropriate use and supervision requirements				
Benches and swing seats in poor condition				
Potential entanglement hazards on climbing equipment				
No posted playground rules				