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Public Playground Safety Checklist

CPSC Document #327

Is your public playground a safe place to play?

Each year, more than 200,000 children go to U.S. hospital emergency rooms with injuries associated with playground equipment. Most injuries occur when a child falls from the equipment onto the ground.

Use this simple checklist to help make sure your local community or school playground is a safe place to play.

Public Playground Safety Checklist

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
4. Check for dangerous hardware, like open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.
5. 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.
6. Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
7. Look out for tripping hazards, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.
8. Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
9. Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.
10. Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure they're safe.

You can also view our [other playground safety publications](#).

PLAYGROUND SAFETY SELF INSPECTION CHECKLIST:

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOU USE THIS CHECKLIST TO COMPLETE PERIODIC SAFETY CHECKS OF THE OUTDOOR PLAY AREA TO REDUCE THE POTENTIAL FOR ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES.

OTHER WAYS TO MAKE THE PLAYGROUND SAFE INCLUDE TALKING TO THE CHILDREN ABOUT THE RULES OF HOW TO USE THE EQUIPMENT; PROPER PLACEMENT OF EQUIPMENT TO ALLOW TRAFFIC BETWEEN THE EQUIPMENT; POSITIONING THE STAFF FOR MAXIMUM SUPERVISION OF ALL CHILDREN, AND STAFF ATTENTIVENESS TO WHAT CHILDREN ARE DOING; SEPARATE PLAY AREAS FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS OR VARIED SCHEDULES FOR OUTDOOR PLAY TIMES; AND LIMITING THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT AREAS. KEEP IN MIND THAT NOT ALL PLAY EQUIPMENT IS MANUFACTURED WITH MULTIPLE CHILDREN IN MIND OR FOR MULTIPLE AGE GROUPS

NAME OF CHILD CARE PROGRAM

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK THE EQUIPMENT FOR CRACKS, BENDING, WARPS, RUSTING, OR BREAKAGE OF ANY COMPONENT | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR TRIPPING HAZARDS, SUCH AS EXPOSED FOOTINGS, ROOTS, ROCKS, ETC. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK WOODEN SLIDES FOR SPLINTERING WOOD WHERE LEGS AND HANDS TOUCH | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR SLIPPING HAZARDS, SUCH AS SAND ON WALKWAYS OR PAVEMENT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK METAL SLIDES THAT THEY DO NOT BECOME TOO HOT WHEN THE SUN SHINES DOWN ON THEM | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK TIRES FOR POOLING WATER, BEE HIVES |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR ANY CRACKED TOYS THAT MAY POSE A PINCHING HAZARD | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR BROKEN SUPPORTS/ANCHORS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR LOOSE NUTS, BOLTS, AND CAPS OR PROTRUDING BOLTS WITH SHARP EDGES AND NO CAPS | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR LACK OF LUBRICATION ON MOVING PARTS. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR SPLINTERING WOOD ON PLAY EQUIPMENT, PICNIC TABLES, AND WOODEN FENCES | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR POOR DRAINAGE AREAS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR PROTRUDING NAILS ON PLAY EQUIPMENT OR FENCES | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR CHIPPING OR PEELING PAINT ON ALL TOYS, EQUIPMENT, AND BUILDINGS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR RUSTY EQUIPMENT AND TOYS ACCESSIBLE TO CHILDREN | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR SHARP EDGES AND POINTS ON TOYS, FENCES, PLAY EQUIPMENT, ETC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK THE CHAINS ON SWINGS TO SEE THAT THEY ARE SECURELY ATTACHED | <input type="checkbox"/> MONITOR FENCE FOR THORNY PLANTS OR BUSHES THAT MAY BE ACCESSIBLE TO CHILDREN'S REACH |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK FOR VANDALISM (BROKEN GLASS, TRASH) | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK TO SEE THAT ALL GATES ON POOL FENCES ARE LATCHED |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MONITOR SAND AND PLAY AREA FOR ANIMAL FECES, POISONOUS PLANTS, MUSHROOMS | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK TO SEE THAT ALL SELF LATCHING DEVICES ON GATES ARE FUNCTIONING PROPERLY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK THE ENERGY ABSORPTIVE MATERIAL UNDER AND AROUND THE PLAY EQUIPMENT, RAKE IF NECESSARY | <input type="checkbox"/> CHECK TO SEE THAT THERE ARE NO CONTAINERS OF STANDING WATER, WHICH COULD POSE A DROWNING HAZARD |

SIGNATURE AND POSITION OF STAFF MEMBER COMPLETING SELF INSPECTION

DATE OF SELF INSPECTION

Table 3. Routine inspection and maintenance issues

- Broken equipment such as loose bolts, missing end caps, cracks, etc.
- Broken glass & other trash
- Cracks in plastics
- Loose anchoring
- Hazardous or dangerous debris
- Insect damage
- Problems with surfacing
- Displaced loose-fill surfacing (see Section 4.3)
- Holes, flakes, and/or buckling of unitary surfacing
- User modifications (such as ropes tied to parts or equipment rearranged)
- Vandalism
- Worn, loose, damaged, or missing parts
- Wood splitting
- Rusted or corroded metals
- Rot



SUGGESTED PLAYGROUND MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

To ensure safety on your playground, please copy and give this checklist to teachers and other playground leaders. If any of these danger points are identified, remove equipment from use and follow your district's procedures for requesting repairs.

DANGER POINTS:

- Visible cracks, bending warping, rusting or breakage of any component.
- Deformation of open hooks, shackles, rings, links, etc.
- Worn swing hangers and chains.
- Missing, damaged or loose swing seats; heavy seats with sharp edges or corners.
- Broken supports/anchors.
- Footings exposed, cracked, loose in ground.
- Accessible sharp edges or points.
- Exposed ends of tubing that should be covered by plugs or caps.
- Protruding bolt ends that do not have smooth finished caps and covers.
- Loose bolts, nuts, etc.
- Splintered, cracked or otherwise deteriorated wood.
- Lack of lubrication on moving parts.
- Worn bearings.
- Broken or missing rails, steps, rungs, seats.
- Surfacing material worn or scattered (in landing pits, etc.).
- Hard surfaces, especially under swings, slides, etc.
- Chipped or peeling paint.
- Vandalism (broken glass, trash, etc.).
- Pinch or crush points (exposed mechanisms, junctures of moving components such as the axis of a seesaw).
- Tripping hazards such as roots, rocks or other environmental obstacles.
- Poor drainage areas.