



GuideOne Center for Risk Management Fact Sheet: Playground Safety

If your organization has a playground, you have a responsibility to ensure the children's safety. Unfortunately, the potential for serious injury exists on a playground. Over 200,000 children each year require emergency medical treatment for playground-related injuries. By examining the crucial areas below, you can maintain a safer playground environment.

Reducing the Risk of Injuries

By examining equipment selection, play area, maintenance, and supervision, you can significantly reduce the risk of playground injuries.

Equipment Selection

- ❑ Consider location carefully.
- ❑ Examine manufacturer's expectations and specifications.
- ❑ Consider which age groups will be using the equipment.
- ❑ Request detailed product information from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Washington, D.C. 20207.

Play Area

Approximately 70% of playground injuries are due to falls.

- ❑ Install equipment in a safe area.
 - Avoid asphalt, concrete, turf, and earth surfaces.
 - Sand, fine gravel, or shredded wood chips are acceptable, but never on top of a hard surface.
 - Rubber mats or material are safer.

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This material is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to give specific legal or risk management advice, nor are any suggested checklists or actions plans intended to include or address all possible risk management exposures or solutions. You are encouraged to retain your own expert consultants and legal advisors in order to develop a risk management plan specific to your own activities. For more information, contact the GuideOne Center for Risk Management at (877) 448-4331, ext. 5118 for Church and Schools, or ext. 5175 for Senior Living Communities.



Maintenance

- Conduct frequent general inspections daily.
- Involve children in the inspection process and encourage them to report any hazards they see.
- Conduct detailed inspections on a regularly scheduled basis.
- Promptly repair any damage or hazards found.

Supervision

Lack of supervision is the number one contributor to injury.

- Children must be given undivided attention.
- A sufficient number of qualified individuals must be present.
- Watch for potential hazards.
- Insist children follow the appropriate safety rules.

Playground Safety Checklist

Checklists can be effective in moving toward a safer playground environment. Answer the following questions relating to general, supervisory, and maintenance precautions to determine the relative safety of your playground. A "NO" answer indicates an area that may warrant further examination.

General Precautions

- Is there a suitable perimeter fence that separates the playground from streets, ponds, and other potential hazards?
- Does posted information include proper equipment usage, how to report potential hazards, and emergency phone numbers?
- Are trash receptacles provided, but away from play areas?
- Are benches, drinking water, and shade available?
- Is equipment properly spaced to provide safe entrance and exit?
- Is the equipment design appropriate for age of children?
- Have playground rules or guidelines been developed and communicated with an attitude and priority of safety?



Supervisory Precautions

- Are appropriate numbers of supervisors on duty during play? The younger the children, the more supervisors needed.
- Does the supervisor make a general evaluation of new or potential hazards when entering the play area?
- Are staff, parents, and children taught the proper use of equipment?
- Does the supervisor deter dangerous activity or misuse of equipment?
- Do the children listen and obey the supervisor?
- Is play suspended when equipment is wet?
- Are ball games, skating, bikes, throwing, and similar activities kept in designated areas away from playground equipment?
- Does the supervisor watch the entire play area, without the distractions of other conversations, paperwork, or activities?
- Does the supervisor have access to first aid, CPR assistance, and a telephone?
Are all injuries reported when medical attention is required?

Maintenance Precautions

- Are maintenance costs for equipment and surfacing included in the annual budget?
- Does the play area have good water drainage, including heavy use areas under swings and at slide exits?
- Is there complete documentation of maintenance activities and injuries or accidents?
- In a written preventive maintenance schedule, do you check for the following items?
 - Miscellaneous debris or litter?
 - Damage by vandalism or wear?
 - Appropriate depth of loose-fill surfaces?
 - Poisonous plants in the area?
 - Protrusions, projections, unrecessed nuts, bolts, or screws?
 - Sharp points, corners, and edges?
 - Worn out ropes, chains, and cables?
 - Potential clothing entanglement hazards (open s-hooks)?
 - Pinch, crush, or shearing points?
 - Exposed moving parts?
 - Tripping hazards?

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- ❑ Unstable equipment anchors?
 - ❑ Rotting, cracks, and splinters?
 - ❑ Rust or corrosion, especially at surface level?
 - ❑ Head entrapment hazards (spaces 3.5" to 9")?
 - ❑ V-angle entrapment hazards?
 - ❑ Finger entrapment hazards (holes or missing end caps)?