

Playground Equipment Check

According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, there are 220,000 estimated emergency room treated injuries annually due to playgrounds. More than 20,000 of those visits were for traumatic brain injuries, such as concussions. The most recent study by the National Program for Playground Safety indicated that falls are the most common hazard (80% of injuries). Other hazard patterns involved equipment, such as breakage, tip over, design, and assembly and entrapment; and colliding with other children or stationary equipment. Playground-related deaths involved entanglement of ropes, leashes, or clothing; falls; and impact from equipment tip over or structural failure.

So what can you do to reduce the risk of injury on your playground? There is a very thorough document by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, titled “Public Playground Safety Handbook.” Some of the key ways to reduce the potential for significant injury include:

- Signs should be posted near the equipment giving guidance as to the age appropriateness of the equipment.
- Appropriate surface materials to protect from falls. Ensure that an appropriate surfacing material is under the equipment. These include materials (rubber mats and tiles) or loose-fill surfacing materials (engineered wood fiber or rubber mulch products designed specifically for playgrounds). Loose-fill materials will compress at least 25% over time due to use and weathering. These surface materials should be maintained and replenished to maintain their appropriate level. Hard surfaces are not recommended, such as asphalt, carpet, concrete, dirt, grass, or wood mulch.
- A comprehensive maintenance program should be developed for each playground. The manufacturer’s maintenance instructions and recommended inspection schedules should be followed. Playgrounds should be inspected at least monthly. All repairs and replacements of equipment parts should be completed following the manufacturer’s instructions. Worn out equipment should be removed.
- Records of all maintenance inspections and repairs should be retained, including manufacturer’s maintenance instructions and any checklists used. Also, any injuries should be recorded.



If you are just starting to think about installing a playground, check with local ordinances to ensure compliance! In addition to the CPSC’s resources, some additional information and suggested checklists can be found on the Insurance Board’s website, Volume 4 Loss Control Manual Youth Activities: Day Care, Trips, and Camps.

Our kids will thank you.

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700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115
PH: 800.437.8830 | FAX: 216.736.3239
www.InsuranceBoard.org

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