

## Public Playground Review and Maintenance

In recent years, it is estimated that there were more than 200,000 injuries annually on public playgrounds across the country that required emergency-room treatment. By following the recommended guidelines in the Consumer Product Safety Commission Handbook, you and your community can create a safer playground environment for all children and contribute to the reduction of playground-related deaths and injuries.

### What is a Public Playground?

“Public” playground equipment refers to equipment for use by children ages 6 months through 12 years in the playground areas of:

- Commercial (non-residential) childcare facilities
- Institutions
- Multiple family dwellings, such as apartment and condominium complexes
- Parks, such as city, state, and community- maintained parks
- Restaurants
- Resorts and recreational developments
- Schools

These guidelines are not intended for amusement park equipment, sports or fitness equipment normally intended for users over the age of 12 years, or home playground equipment. Equipment components intended solely for children with disabilities and modified to accommodate such users also are not covered by these guidelines.

The safety of each individual piece of playground equipment as well as the layout of the entire play area should be considered when designing or evaluating a playground for safety. Since falls are a very common playground hazard pattern, the installation and maintenance of protective surfacing under and around all equipment is crucial to protect children from severe head injuries. Because all playgrounds present some challenge and because children can be expected to use equipment in unintended and unanticipated ways, adult supervision is highly recommended.

A copy of the Public Playground Safety Handbook can be viewed or downloaded at the following web address: [www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122149/325.pdf](http://www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122149/325.pdf)

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# Playground Safety Action Items

1. Replace hard surfacing with shock-absorbing material. Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of mulch, sand, pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber, or shredded rubber.
2. Check that the protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure the surfacing extends in back and in front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
3. Ensure that play structures, more than 30 inches high, are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
4. Check for dangerous hardware, such as open “S” hooks, or protruding bolt ends.
5. Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in railings or between ladder rungs measure less than 3.5 inches, or more than 9 inches.
6. Check for sharp points or edges in or on equipment.
7. Ensure that all anchoring devices for playground equipment, such as concrete footings or horizontal bars at the bottom of flexible climbers, are installed below ground level in addition to below the base of the protective surfacing material.
8. Be sure that elevated surfaces, such as platforms and ramps, have railings to prevent falls.
9. Repair or remove any broken or non-operating equipment.
10. Remove any non-recommended public playground equipment, as referenced in the CPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety, such as:
  - Animal figure swings
  - Multiple occupancy swings
  - Rope Swings
  - Swing dual exercise rings and trapeze bars
11. Implement training for playground inspection and maintenance staff.
12. Make immediate repairs and/or follow through with written work order procedures.
13. For new equipment purchase and installation; use only International Playground Equipment Manufacturers Association member companies for equipment and installation. If your employees and/or volunteers are used to install equipment, then the manufacturer’s representative should supervise the installation process.

# Playground Inspection and Maintenance Checklist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/ Location of Playground

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Inspector

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time of day

Safety Item	Yes	No
Loose or missing bolts		
Missing end caps		
Loose anchoring		
Frayed cables or worn ropes		
Other worn, loose, damaged or missing parts		
Rusted or corroded metals		
Wood rot		
Wood splinters		
Paint is peeling or cracking		
Cracks in plastic parts		
Vandalism or graffiti		
Insect infestation		
Broken glass, trash or hazardous debris		
Displaced loose-fill surfacing		
Holes, flakes or buckling of unitary surfacing		
Other surfacing problems		
Grass, trees, or shrubs need repair		
Playground rules and safety signs missing or vandalized		
Fencing or gates need repair		

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
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