

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Playground Surface Material Selection

The chart below summarizes the CPSC comments regarding various categories of playground surfacing material. In general, hard materials and soil are not recommended. Compact materials should only be used under equipment whose maximum height is five feet or less. Organic or inorganic loose materials both provide excellent protection with organic materials providing more protection.

The drawback of organic and inorganic loose materials is that they are effective only if they are properly maintained. This requires frequent grading and leveling in order to maintain a suggested depth of six inches. A boundary framework, which helps to keep the material beneath the equipment, will lessen the amount of maintenance required. These materials also require maintenance to eliminate insects, animal excrement, and other litter.

PLAYGROUND SURFACING MATERIALS

	Organic Loose (Pine bark nuggets, shredded bark, etc.)	Inorganic Loose (Sand, pea gravel, shredded tires, etc.)	Compact (Outdoor rubber mats, synthetics, etc.)	Soil/Grass	Concrete Asphalt
Cushioning Potential	Depends on air trapped within and between particles May decompose or mix with dirt over time & lose cushioning properties	May combine with dirt or other matter reducing cushioning properties.	Depends upon the foundation or surface over, which the material is installed. Rubber mats generally provide protection from falls 5 feet or less	Minimal protection	None
Environmental Effects	Cushioning decreased by rainy or humid weather Materials may freeze when wet Wet materials may promote the growth of communicable diseases	Cushioning decreased by rainy or humid weather Some materials (i.e., sand) may freeze when wet Some types of rocks re-lease dust & are difficult to walk on	Attractive targets for defacing, ignition, or other vandalism	May freeze and harden	Varied
Maintenance	Frequent grading and leveling necessary to maintain depth. Necessary to eliminate insects, animal excrement, and litter	Frequent grading and leveling necessary to maintain depth Necessary to eliminate insects, animal excrement, and litter	Little is required	Grass is difficult to maintain in heavy traffic areas	Little required
Other	Highest cushioning potential of all surfacing materials	Washed round pea-size gravel makes a good surface	Must be used on level, uniform surface	Better than concrete or asphalt but generally not recommended	NOT RECOMMENDED

This is a sample guideline furnished to you by Glatfelter Public Practice. Your organization should review it and make the necessary modifications to meet the needs of your organization. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing risk exposure to the public, personnel and property. For additional information on this topic, you may contact your GPP Risk Control Representative. www.glatfelterpublicpractice.com