

Professional Underwriters

Safe Schools Agenda

Route to:

— Superintendent
— School Business Off.
— Athletic Director
— Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
— Site Administrators
— Transportation Dir.
— Lunch Director
— Classroom Teachers

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A monthly service provided to help you with your efforts to make your school safe for students, staff and the public

Check Your Playground Risk Management Plan Early

April is the time to check your playgrounds for hazards that can contribute to childhood injuries. It is a fact that each year in the U.S., emergency departments treat more than 200,000 children ages 14 and younger for playground-related injuries. According to the Office of Technology Assessment, the cost was an estimated \$1.2 billion in 1995, as well as stress and sometimes permanent damage to the children.

About 45% of nonfatal injuries are severe: fractures, internal injuries, concussions, dislocations and amputations. Most injuries (75%) related to playground equipment occur on school and daycare center playgrounds.

Girls are slightly more at risk for injury than boys (55% vs. 45%). Children 5 to 9 have higher rates of emergency department visits for playground injuries than any other age group.

More injuries occur on climbers than on any other equipment.

According to the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) all injuries involve falls to the surface under the equipment, so that should be your first priority in looking for hazards. Is the surface cushioning, such as well-raked and loose woodchips, or other manufactured material? Is it kept free of debris on a daily basis? If it is wood chips, does the depth meet CPSC guidelines? Soil, packed dirt, grass and turf are not recommended for surfacing, as their shock-absorbing ability can be affected greatly by weather conditions and wear.

Are play areas separated by age group, type of equipment and active or passive play? Is their adequate space for children to exit equipment such as slides or merry-go-rounds? Is the playground

protected from adjacent streets by fences, shrubs, or other barriers? Does any of the equipment have angles or openings that could trap a child's head or any part of a child's body? (See CPSC guidelines) Do elevated platforms have guardrails more than 30 inches high and less than or equal to 48 inches high? Are hand grips sized and shaped so that children can grasp them easily?

How about your maintenance program? Thorough inspections of playground areas and equipment should be performed frequently and regularly. If repairs cannot be made immediately, equipment should be removed from service until repaired. Your inspection program should look for:

- Loose, damaged or missing supports, anchors or footings
- Loose or missing nuts, bolts, or other connectors
- Broken or missing rails, steps, rungs, or seats
- Bending, warping, rusting or breakage of any component
- Protective end caps missing from bolts or tubes
- Sharp edges or points due to wear or breakage
- Deformed hooks, shackles, rings, links, etc.
- Worn swing hangers and chains
- Worn bearings
- Lack of lubrication on moving parts
- Exposed mechanisms such as joints or springs that could result in pinch or crush injury
- Splintered or deteriorated wood
- Cracks or holes in surfacing materials
- Trash in area
- Environmental hazards such as roots, rocks, or poor drainage areas
- Slip resistant materials have not worn off
- Slides are clean and smooth for easy gliding.

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Don't Forget to Train Your Playground Supervisors

Administrators have legal duties to prevent injuries by making sure that playground design, maintenance, inspection and supervision meet accepted standards. They also have the duty to train and monitor the activities of the supervisors. Supervisors get hurt on playgrounds that get out of control.



SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

There are five areas of supervision:

- Pre-inspection of the facility
- Rules and guidelines
- Actual supervision
- Critical incident plan
- Reports, reviews and forms

Pre-Inspection

- Review inspection forms
- Instill importance of pre-inspection by supervisors each time they go out on the fields and play areas

Rules and regulations

- Discuss what is allowed and where
- By equipment
- Layout of fields and areas
- By school policy

Actual supervision

- The power of close supervision
- Understanding risk taking behaviors
- How children get hurt on playgrounds
- The importance of checking clothing for strings, scarves, etc.
- Separation of play areas
- Traffic flow: catch problems early
- Equipment hazards and what to watch for
- Site specific hazards and what to watch for
- Physical disabilities and what to watch for
- Strangers on the playground

Critical incident plan

- First aid for victim
- Communications
- Supervision of other students

Reports and forms

- Accident report forms
- Inspection forms
- Work order forms
- Any other school forms used by supervisors

Where do I stand?

- Always position yourself so you can see the most children and the most activities taking place and where the children can see and hear you.

How long do I stay in one spot?

- Long enough to assess how the children are playing, who is acting up, and long enough for children to see you.

Where do I move to next?

- Always try to move to a spot that gives you the most advantage to see the most activities and the most children, but the activity should be your guide.

What do I look for?

- Look for improper condition or action. Correct the action or condition or cease the activity.

What not to do

- Do not participate or referee in any games or activities during open play or recess.
- Do not leave the area except for emergency reasons. Use Emergency Cards whenever possible. If you must leave the area notify a co-supervisor.
- Do not socialize with students or other supervisors; this is not the time for socializing. In order to adequately supervise, all supervisors should be spread out.