

PLAYGROUND INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Playgrounds are great assets in a community. In addition to providing opportunities for fun and exercise, they help children develop physically, socially, and intellectually. Unfortunately, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 200,000 children head to the emergency room each year because of playground-related injuries. This bulletin outlines some areas of consideration when providing public playgrounds in the community and offers two safety checklists for public entities to help them maintain a safe environment for kids to play.

Age Appropriateness

Children have different needs and abilities at various ages and stages of development. Therefore, playground equipment must be in scale with the sizes, abilities and developmental needs of the children who will be playing there. These characteristics vary greatly from age 2 to 12. To provide a challenging but safe play environment for all ages, ensure the playground equipment is appropriate for the age of the intended user and separate play areas intended for pre-school age children (2 to 5) from play areas intended for school-age children (5 to 12).

Supervision

Children often use playground equipment in unintended ways. When adults supervise children, they can help protect them by identifying dangerous situations and intervening. The CDC reports that lack of supervision is associated with almost half of playground injuries. Design play areas so parents and other caregivers can easily oversee their children, limit equipment to specific age groups and post rules about the use of playground equipment.

Fall Surfacing

Emergency rooms treat about 600 children a day for playground-related injuries. Over three quarters of these injuries are due to falls and surface impact, making improper surfacing material a top concern. The type of fall-absorbent material, the depth of the material and regular maintenance are important factors in reducing the risk of injury when a child falls from the playground equipment.

Maintenance

Regular inspection of playground equipment and surface areas is an important way to support a safe play environment. Entities may use the following checklists in support of their regular maintenance schedule.

It is important to remember that self-inspections are just one part of a comprehensive maintenance program. Be sure to note any problems found during the inspection process and fix them as soon as possible. Also, retain records of all maintenance inspections, issues and repairs as well as the manufacturer's maintenance instructions and any checklists used.

REFERENCES

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012). Playground Injuries: Fact Sheet. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Playground-Injuries/playgroundinjuries-factsheet.htm>

PUBLIC PLAYGROUND SAFETY CHECKLIST

The Public Playground Safety Checklist is a concise form based on guidelines developed by the Consumer Product Safety Commission and can be used on an ongoing basis.

Playground Site

Inspection Date

Thorough inspections of the playground area and equipment should be performed frequently and regularly. If repairs cannot be made immediately, equipment should be removed from service until repaired.

- Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
- Check that protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
- Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
- Check for dangerous hardware, like open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.
- Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
- Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
- Look out for tripping hazards, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps and rocks.
- Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
- Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.
- Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure they are safe.

REFERENCES

- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (2010). Handbook for Public Playground Safety. Pub. No. 325. Retrieved from <https://www.cpsc.gov>

PLAYGROUND INSPECTION CHECKLIST

The Playground Inspection Checklist provides a more detailed structure for documenting inspection dates, comments, recommended actions and follow-up actions taken. A trained individual may use this guide to observe and report potential risks at a playground site.

Playground Site

Completed By

Playground Condition Inspected	Date Inspected	Comments	Recommended Actions	Date Completed
Loose, damaged, unsecured, or missing supports, anchors or footings				
Exposed footings				
Loose or missing nuts, bolts or other connectors				
Broken or missing rails, steps, rungs or seats				
Broken or missing guard rails on elevated equipment				
Bending, warping, rusting or breakage of any component or component part				
Sharp edges or points due to wear or breakage				
Deformed hooks, shackles, rings or links				

Playground Condition Inspected	Date Inspected	Comments	Recommended Actions	Date Completed
Lack of lubrication on moving parts				
Exposed mechanisms such as joints or springs that could result in pinch or crush injuries				
Splintered, cracked or deteriorated wood				
Cracks or holes in surfacing materials				
Trash in area, particularly glass or cans, litter or animal excrement				
Tripping hazards from roots, rocks or ruts				
Poor drainage areas				
Broken equipment				
Rusted metal equipment				
Protective surface depth of less than 12 inches or in poor condition				
Evidence of vandalism				

Playground Condition Inspected	Date Inspected	Comments	Recommended Actions	Date Completed
Worn swing hangers and chains				
Exposed screws, tubes and bolts/missing protective end caps				
Slip-resistant materials in poor condition				
Chipped or peeling paint				
Lead paint				
CCA-treated wood				
No visible signage identifying age appropriate use and supervision requirements				