

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Sandbox Safety Considerations

Sandboxes can harbor physical, chemical and biological hazards that accumulate in the sand. The sand can be contaminated from children's use, litter, natural debris, animal and bird excrement, insects, precipitation and other sources. To reduce the transmission of disease and to enhance the safety of sandboxes the following areas should be considered when a school or municipality is designing, installing and maintaining a sandbox for community use.

Sandbox Design

- Sandboxes are typically built from wood or plastic composites. Plastic composites require less maintenance, are easier to clean, and are sold through vendors. Wooden sandboxes are also sold through vendors or can be constructed by competent carpenters who are either volunteer or in-house staff members.
- It's important for the sandbox materials and fasteners to be free of splinters, hooks, nails, spikes and other protrusions that can create physical hazards to the children.
- Lining the base of the sandbox with heavy duty plastic sheeting or making it solid can help prevent weeds from growing up through the sand.
- Sandboxes that have drainage can help prevent the puddling of water within the play area.

Sandbox Location

- Sandboxes should be located outside of the use zones of other playground equipment such as swings, slides and climbing apparatus so that the use zone of one area does not overlap with another use zone creating a potential hazard.
- Keep sandboxes away from open areas where students run and play ball as this could create a potential tripping hazard.
- Shield sandboxes from prevailing winds to reduce the potential for dry sand to become airborne and blow into the children's faces. Windbreaks can include small shrubbery, buildings and fencing, however the shielding should not obstruct the view of the playground monitors.

Sandbox Covers

- Place a cover over sandboxes when they are not in use to reduce the amount of precipitation, debris and animal/bird excrement getting into the play sand.
- The cover should be designed so that precipitation drains off and does not puddle on the cover.
- Secure the cover when the sandbox is not in use so that children and animals cannot crawl under it.
- Securely store the cover when the sandbox is in use so that it is not subject to wind, dirt and vandalism.
- Be aware of the fasteners for the cover so they do not create other hazards such as pinch points, sharp edges or protrusions that can injure sandbox users.

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

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Sand Selection

- Use sand listed as “Playground Sand” that is specifically made for sandbox use in lieu of construction sand.
- Prior to replacing the sand the inside of the sandbox walls and base should be cleaned and disinfected.
- Do not treat the sand with any chemicals.
- Replace the sand when it is evident that the materials have become contaminated to the point it cannot be cleaned effectively. The frequency of replacement varies depending on the location, covering, and use. Some organizations recommend replacing all of the sand every one to two years.

Sandbox Inspection and Maintenance

- Rake sandboxes daily to remove foreign material from the sand. Examples of items to look for include broken toys, sharp objects, animal feces, insects, rocks leaves, sticks, trash and cigarettes.
- It’s important to inspect sandboxes regularly for rough areas, splinters, nails, protruding spikes and fasteners drainage, vandalism and structural deficiencies.

References

1. National Association for the Education of Young Children, Accreditation Criteria for Physical Environment Standard 9.B.05
2. Sandbox Safety – North Dakota *Child Care Resource & Referral Health Consultant Team*
<http://www.ndchildcare.org/providers/health-safety/docs/Sandbox%20Safety.pdf>
3. Kid-Safe Your Backyard, <http://www.pediatricsafety.net>