

# PLAYGROUND *Injuries*



## Reality Alert

“On a chilly day in California several children were playing on a playground structure. As a 2-year-old began climbing the steps to the slide, the drawstring from his hooded sweatshirt got caught between the slats and stretched tight.”

“In the short time that the daycare employee had stopped watching the play set, the boy lost consciousness. When the boy was seen laying lifeless on the slide the employee rushed to help. CPR was performed on the boy until emergency crews arrived. The boy was pronounced dead at the hospital.”

An estimated 500,000 children under the age of 14 sustain injuries on playgrounds every year; 100,000 to 200,000 of these injuries require emergency-room care. Playground-related injuries among children cost an estimated \$1.7 billion each year. Although far more children are injured in car accidents than on playgrounds, the playground injuries are more likely to be severe. Severe injuries include broken bones, dislocations, and contusions.

Between 1990 and 2000, 147 children died from playground-related injuries. Of these, 82, or 56%, died from strangulation and 31, or 20%, died from falls to the playground surface. Most of these deaths occurred on home/private playgrounds.

Playground-Related Fatalities, Age by Location

Age of Victim	Location			
	Total	Public	Home	Misc
Total	147	38	90	19
0-1	6	1	3	2
2-4	40	9	28	3
5-9	70	18	44	8
10-12	21	9	10	2
13-14	9	1	4	4
Unknown	1	0	1	0

On public playgrounds most injuries occur on climbing features, while swings are responsible for most injuries on home/private playgrounds.

## Loss Prevention Strategies

- Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand, or pea gravel, or are safety-tested rubber mats.
- Check that protective surfacing extends at least six feet in all directions from play equipment.
- Make sure structures more than 30 inches tall 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, like guardrail opening or 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’re safe.

# Safety Report Card



## Does your playground make the grade?

Evaluate your playground using this criteria provided by the National Program for Playground Safety.

Supervision	Yes	No
Adults are present when children are on equipment.		
Children can be easily viewed on equipment.		
Children can be viewed in crawl spaces.		
Rules are posted regarding expected behavior.		
Age-Appropriate Design	Yes	No
Playgrounds have separate areas for ages 2-5 and 5-12.		
Platforms have appropriate guardrails.		
Platforms allow change of directions to get on/off structure.		
Signage indicating age group for equipment is provided.		
Equipment design prevents climbing outside the structure.		
Supporting structure prevents climbing on it.		
Fall Surfacing	Yes	No
Suitable surfacing materials are provided.		
Height of all equipment is eight feet or lower.		
Appropriate depth of loose fill is provided.		
Six-foot use zone has appropriate surfacing.		
Concrete footings are covered.		
Surface is free of foreign objects.		
Equipment Maintenance	Yes	No
Equipment is free of noticeable gaps.		
Equipment is free of head entrapments.		
Equipment is free of broken parts.		
Equipment is free of missing parts.		
Equipment is free of protruding bolts.		
Equipment is free of rust.		
Equipment is free of splinters.		
Equipment is free of cracks/holes.		
Total Points		

### Scoring System

Total the number of "Yes" answers in the "total Points" box in the table.

#### 24 – 20 = A

Congratulations on having a SAFE playground. Please continue to maintain the excellence.

#### 19 – 17 = B

Your playground is on its way to providing a safe environment for children. Work on the areas checked 'No'.

#### 16 – 13 = C

Your playground is potentially hazardous for children. Take corrective measures.

#### 12 – 8 = D

Children are at risk on this playground. Start to make improvements.

#### 7 – 0 = F

Do not allow children on this playground. Make changes immediately.

\*If any of the gray boxes are marked 'No', the potential of a life-threatening injury is significantly increased. Contact the owner of the playground.

# Playground Maintenance Checklist



Item to be Checked		OK	Deficiency Noted	Date Corrected
<b>A. Overall Structure</b>				
1.	Post and play event footings are not exposed, cracked, or lose.			
2.	Clamps show no sign of slippage, cracking, or failure.			
3.	Clamp drive screws and/or pins are secure.			
4.	Welds are intact and free of cracks.			
5.	Slide and Deck Enclosures			
6.	Challenge Ladders			
7.	Swing, Ring Trek, and Track Ride Cross Beams			
8.	Arch, Curly, and Pipe Climbers			
9.	Mounting Blocks			
10.	No rust or corrosion.			
11.	No splintered, cracked, or otherwise deteriorated wood.			
12.	No scratched, chipped, or peeling paint.			
13.	Metal parts show no visible cracks, bending, warping, or breakage.			
14.	No missing bolts, nuts, screws, etc.			
15.	All bolts, nuts, screws, etc. are tight.			
16.	All joints are secure.			
17.	All swivels, bearings, grease fittings, and moving parts are well-lubricated and not excessively worn.			
18.	No broken or missing parts.			
19.	No sharp edges or unsafe protrusions.			
20.	No exposed mechanisms, junctions or moving parts, or components are posing possible pinch or crush points.			
<b>B. Play Events</b>				
1.	Plastic is not cut or cracked.			
2.	All slide support/anchors are intact and secure.			
3.	All 'S' hooks are closed and not excessively worn.			
<b>C. Swings</b>				
1.	All 'S' hooks are closed and not excessively worn.			
2.	No exposed metal on swing seats.			
3.	Swivel rubber sleeve of tire swing is in place and not excessively worn.			
4.	Swing chain is in good condition and not excessively worn, especially at connection points.			
5.	Connectors and chain have free movement.			
<b>D. Surrounding Area</b>				
1.	Resilient surfacing material is not scattered or excessively worn.			
2.	Resilient surfacing material is adequately deep and retains its fall absorbing abilities as specified at installation.			
3.	Border around playground is in good condition and has not come loose.			
4.	No roots, rocks, or other objects are causing a tripping hazard.			
5.	Area is clean of litter.			
6.	Benches are securely fastened to underlying cement pad.			