



## PLAYGROUND SAFETY

### LOSS CONTROL BULLETIN

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Each year in the United States, more than 200,000 children visit hospital emergency rooms with injuries from playground equipment. Injuries from playground equipment can include cuts, scrapes, entrapment, entanglement, impalement, burns, trips, and falls. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, most playground injuries occur when a child falls from the playground equipment onto the ground.

#### PROTECTIVE SURFACING

Since falls are a very common playground hazard, the installation and maintenance of protective surfacing under and around all equipment is crucial to protect children from severe injuries, including head injuries. Protective surfacing should extend 6 feet in all directions from general playground equipment. For swings, protective surfacing (in the front and back) should extend twice the height of the suspending bar. Appropriate surfacing includes any material tested to ASTM F1292 Standards. This includes:

- Pea gravel
- Sand
- Shredded/recycled rubber mulch
- Wood chips
- Wood mulch (not treated with chromated copper arsenate )
- Unitary surfaces (e.g. safety-tested rubber mats)

Inappropriate surfacing materials are asphalt, carpet, concrete, dirt, and grass. Loose-fill protective surfaces

should be filled at least 12 inches deep. Keep in mind that loose-fill materials will compress at least 25 percent over time due to use and weathering, so frequent maintenance and inspection is important. Consider marking playground equipment supports with a minimum fill level to aid in maintaining the original depth of material.

#### HEAD ENTRAPMENT

Head entrapment is a serious concern on playgrounds because it can lead to strangulation and death. A child's head may become entrapped when entering an opening either head first, or feet first. Openings present an entrapment hazard if the distance between any interior opposing surfaces is greater than 3.5 inches and less than 9 inches.

There has been a recent increase in head entrapment incidents due to children wearing bicycle helmets and becoming entrapped in spaces that would normally not be considered hazardous. Children should not be allowed to wear bicycle helmets while on playground equipment.

#### SHARP POINTS, CORNERS, AND EDGES

Sharp points, corners, and edges may cut or puncture a child's skin. Make sure that all metal edges are rolled or have rounded capping, and that all wooden parts are smooth and free from splinters. Frequent inspections of playground equipment are important to help prevent injuries as wear and tear of equipment over time can create sharp points and rough surfaces.

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### PLATFORMS, GUARDRAILS, AND PROTECTIVE BARRIERS

Children can be injured in accidental falls from elevated platforms. Platforms should be flat and openings should be perforated to allow for drainage.

Platforms for toddlers should be no more than 32 inches above the ground and should be equipped with guardrails and/or protective barriers that completely surround the platform except for entrance and exit openings.

The maximum clearance opening without a top, horizontal guardrail should be 15 inches.

### SUPERVISION

Playgrounds present some special challenges because children will use the equipment in unintended and unanticipated ways, so adult supervision is imperative.

Daily inspections should be completed to check for broken or damaged equipment, as well as for any unsafe modifications made to equipment. Supervisors should also make sure that children are wearing appropriate footwear and stop dangerous horseplay.

**PREVENTION IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS. TRUST IN TOMORROW.® CONTACT YOUR AGENT TODAY TO LEARN ABOUT OUR LOSS PREVENTION PROGRAMS.**

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# PLAYGROUND SAFETY CHECKLIST

- 1) Do all surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of protective surfacing?  
 YES       NO      Corrective action required:
- 2) For general equipment, does protective surfacing extend at least 6 feet in all directions?  
 YES       NO      Corrective action required:
- 3) For swings, does the protective surfacing extend, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar?  
 YES       NO      Corrective action required:
- 4) Are structures more than 30 inches high spaced at least 9 feet apart?  
 YES       NO      Corrective action required:
- 5) Is there any dangerous hardware, like open "S" hooks on swings or protruding bolt ends that need to be repaired or replaced?  
 YES       NO      Corrective action required:
- 6) Are there any openings that could trap children (measuring between 3.5 inches to 9 inches in width)?  
 YES       NO      Corrective action required:
- 7) Are there any sharp points or edges in equipment that need to be repaired?  
 YES       NO      Corrective action required:
- 8) Are there any tripping hazards such as exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks?  
 YES       NO      Corrective action required:
- 9) Are elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, provided with adequate guardrails to prevent falls?  
 YES       NO      Corrective action required: