

## Safety Checklist for Active Play Areas

The following checklist is based primarily on the recommendations of the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) as specified in their current Handbook for Public Playground Safety, and the current ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) Standards. Not every recommendation is included in this checklist; refer to the handbook and the standard for complete information. Successfully completing this checklist will help you make your play area safer.

**You will need a yardstick and/or measuring tape to complete this checklist.**

**By checking “Yes” below, you confirm that the recommendation has been met or that a hazard is NOT present. When you check “No”, be sure to make a corrective action plan on the last page of the checklist.**

### **Surfacing**

Measure the highest point on every piece of play equipment. For swings, the highest point is from the pivot point where the swing is suspended down to the ground. For elevated platforms with guardrails the highest point is the top of the guardrail down to the ground. For elevated platforms with barriers the highest point is the height of the platform down to the ground. For all other structures, height is measured from the highest point of the structure down to the ground.

**Yes**

**No**

Surfaces underneath indoor and outdoor play equipment that allow children to get off the ground are covered with impact-absorbing material according to the recommendations for critical height (Table below from CPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety).

<b>TABLE 1 — CRITICAL HEIGHTS (in feet) of TESTED MATERIALS</b>				
<b>MATERIAL</b>	<b>UNCOMPRESSED DEPTH</b>			<b>COMPRESSED DEPTH</b>
	<b>6 inch</b>	<b>9 inch</b>	<b>12 inch</b>	<b>9 inch</b>
Wood Chips*	7	10	11	10
Double Shredded Bark Mulch	6	10	11	7
Engineered Wood Fibers**	6	7	>12	6
Fine Sand	5	5	9	5
Coarse Sand	5	5	6	4
Fine Gravel	6	7	10	6
Medium Gravel	5	5	6	5
Shredded Tires***	10-12	N/A	N/A	N/A

\* This product was referred to as Wood Mulch in previous versions of this handbook. The term Wood Chips more accurately describes the product.

\*\* This product was referred to as Uniform Wood Chips in previous versions of this handbook. In the playground industry, the product is more commonly known as Engineered Wood Fibers.

\*\*\* This data is from tests conducted by independent testing laboratories on a 6 inch depth of uncompressed shredded tire samples produced by four manufacturers. The tests reported critical heights which varied from 10 feet to greater than 12 feet. It is recommended that persons seeking to install shredded tires as a protective surface request test data from the supplier showing the critical height of the material when it was tested in accordance with ASTM F1292.

**Surfacing** (cont'd)

Yes No

- Unitary rubber surfacing like rubber pads and poured-in-place rubber surfacing meets the ASTM F1292 Standard for the highest point of the play equipment.
- The following surfacing materials are not in use underneath indoor and outdoor play equipment that children can climb: asphalt, concrete, soil or hard-packed dirt, grass, turf, linoleum, or carpeting.
- The dirt in the play area has been tested and found free of toxic materials, including lead.
- There are no toys or objects (including surfacing material) with a diameter less than 1 1/4 inch accessible to children who are still placing objects in their mouths.

**Use Zones**

Yes No

- Use zones, the area under and around the equipment where impact absorbing surfacing is required, is a minimum of 6 feet.
- If two pieces of equipment, side by side, are lower than 30" high the use zone between them is six feet or more.
- If two pieces of equipment are side by side and one or both is higher than 30" the use zone between them is nine feet or more.
- Use zones for moving equipment such as swings and merry-go-rounds do not overlap.
- For to-fro swings: the impact-absorbing surfacing material extends twice the height of the pivot point to the ground in front and twice the height of the pivot point to the ground in back of the swings.
- For tot swings: the impact-absorbing surfacing material extends twice the height from the bottom of the seat to the pivot point in front and twice the height of the bottom of the seat to the pivot point in back.
- For tire swings: the impact attenuating surface extends the height from the top of the tire to the pivot point plus 6 feet.
- For slides: the impact-absorbing surfacing material extends at least 6 feet from the end of the slide chute -or- a distance that equals the height of the slide platform. The impact absorbing surface never needs to extend more than 8 feet.

**Protrusion & Entanglement**

Yes No

- All metal edges are rolled.
- There are no small pieces of the equipment (like hardware and small bars) that stick out from the equipment that could puncture a child or that could catch clothing.
- There are no strings or loose items on children's clothing or around children's necks that could get caught on play equipment.

**Protrusion & Entanglement** (cont'd)

- | Yes                      | No                       |                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Any exposed bolts do not protrude more than two threads beyond the face of the nut; exposed bolts have no burrs or sharp edges. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no open "S" hooks.                                                                                                    |

**Entrapment**

- | Yes                      | No                       |                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no openings in any pieces of play equipment between 3 ½ and 9 inches that could cause head entrapment. |

**Equipment Placement**

- | Yes                      | No                       |                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Equipment that moves such as swings and merry-go-rounds are placed on the outside edge of the playground. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Traffic patterns are designed to prevent children from bumping into each other.                           |

**Trip Hazards**

- | Yes                      | No                       |                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | All anchoring devices, such as footings and bars at the bottom of climbers, are below the playing surface. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no exposed tree / plant roots.                                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Changes in elevation are made obvious by the use of brightly colored visual or other barriers.             |

**Appropriate Activities & Equipment**

- | Yes                      | No                       |                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Age-specific play areas are separated by distance or a physical barrier.                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Equipment is warranted by the manufacturer as suitable for the age of the users (2-5 years and 5-12 years) according to ASTM Standard F1487. |

**Pinch, Crush, & Shearing Points**

- | Yes                      | No                       |                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | All openings are too big or too small to entrap a child's finger in a moving part.                                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | All wooden parts are smooth and without splinters.                                                                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | All corners are rounded, especially at exit ends and sides along a slide bed.                                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Exposed ends of tubing have caps that cannot be removed without tools. There are no openings in the equipment where insects can build nests. |

**Guardrails, Handrails, and Safety Barriers**

- | Yes                      | No                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Guardrails or protective barriers are provided to prevent unintentional or deliberate falls off elevated platforms.                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | For preschool children: elevated surfaces more than 20 inches high have a guardrail or protective barrier; those more than 30 inches high have a protective barrier (an enclosing device that is intended to prevent both unintentional and deliberate attempts to pass through the barrier). |

**Guardrails, Handrails, and Safety Barriers** (cont'd)

Yes No

- For school age children: elevated surfaces more than 30 inches high have a guardrail or protective barrier; those more than 48 inches high have a protective barrier.
- Handrails are between 1" and 1 ½" and are at waist to shoulder height of the child users (22" - 38").
- Boundaries such as painted lines or dividers separate play equipment from walking areas.
- Bike or trike riding areas are separate from other areas.
- Playgrounds are fenced in.

**Unsafe Equipment**

Yes No

- There are no heavy swings or swings made out of wood, metal, or other rigid materials.
- There are no animal figure swings.
- There are no multiple-use occupancy swings (swings used by more than one child at a time) other than tire swings.
- There are no swing sets with more than 2 swings per bay.
- There are no rope swings; all ropes are anchored at both ends.
- There are no trapeze bars or free swinging rings (exception: rings with chains less than 7 inches long).
- Any see-saws present have a spring centering device for children 2-5 years of age. If see saws are used, for older children there must be a shock absorbing material required to cushion seat impact on the surface and the maximum height of the seat above the protective surfacing must not exceed 5 feet.
- There are no trampolines.
- There are no swinging gates.

**Maintenance**

Yes No

- Daily checks include: broken glass, animal waste, trash, toxic plants or plant debris, damage by vandals, displaced surfacing, broken equipment, chipping paint, puddles of water, insect hazards, need for lubrication of moving parts.
- All hardware fasteners, permanent coverings, or connecting devices are tight and cannot be removed without tools.
- All surfaces are intact.
- All structures are sturdy enough that they will not move or tip over when the weight of an adult is put against them.

**Maintenance** (cont'd)

Yes No

- There is no peeling paint (lead in peeling paint on play equipment is a common hazard). Play equipment manufactured prior to 1978 is likely to contain leaded paint.
- All ropes are tight and strands cannot be pulled apart.

**Supervision**

Yes No

- All areas where children can play are in view of an adult at all times.
- The same child: staff ratio is maintained during active play indoors and outdoors.
- Every child is accounted for at all times by a supervising adult. Some method of assuring that no child is hidden or missing from the group must be used.
- When children must leave the play area to use the toilet, to get first aid, or for any other reason, supervision of the child who leaves and the children who remain in the play area is secure and consistent.
- Children are prevented from playing in a way that challenges them beyond their abilities or that puts others at risk of significant injury.

**Slides**

Yes No

- Slides are no taller than 6 ½ feet and have side rims at least 4 inches high.
- Slides have a barrier at the top for children to get into position to slide.
- Slide ladders have flat steps and a handrail on each side. For users 2-12 years of age, steps are ≤ 9 inches apart. Rungs are ≤ 12 inches apart. (If steps are ≤ 9 inches apart, check for entrapment).
- Slide beds have a flat surface at the bottom to slow children down and are sloped at no greater than a 30 degree angle overall.
- Slides with metal beds are shaded to prevent overheating.
- There are no full spiral slides accessible to preschoolers.

**Sand**

Yes No

- Sand digging areas are in the shade.
- Sand digging areas are contained by smooth frames.
- Sand is covered when not in use to prevent infectious disease and injury risk when animals and insects get into it.

### **Swings**

- | <b>Yes</b>               | <b>No</b>                |                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Swings are not attached to any other type of equipment.                                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Swing footings are stable and buried below the ground and covered by protective surfacing.                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There is no corrosion evident on hooks or chains.                                                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no "A" frames with horizontal cross bars present.                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tot swings are in a separate bay from the other swings.                                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Swing hangers are spaced wider than the seats, not less than 20 inches.                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There is a minimum space of 24 inches between seats and 30 inches between the swing and supporting structure. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The distance between the bottom of the seat and the protective surface is at least 12 inches.                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The distance between the bottom of the tot swing and the protective surface is at least 24 inches.            |

### **Multi-Axis Tire Swings**

- | <b>Yes</b>               | <b>No</b>                |                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tire swings are not attached to any other type of play equipment.                                                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tire swings do not share a bay with any other type of swing and are not mounted on any structure with other play components. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no exposed steel belts in steel-belted radial tire swings.                                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are drain holes in tire swing tires.                                                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The minimum clearance between the extended tire and support structure is 30 inches.                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The tire swing itself weighs less than 35 pounds.                                                                            |

### **Climbers**

- | <b>Yes</b>               | <b>No</b>                |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Climbers have a safe way off for children who cannot complete the activity.                                                                                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | No places exist where children can fall more than 18 inches onto any component of the climber.                                                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Connections between ropes, cables, or chains are securely fixed.                                                                                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no free standing arch climbers, sliding poles, chain walks, free standing climbers with flexible components or parallel bars accessible to preschoolers.       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Horizontal ladders and chinning bars are used only by children who are over 4 years of age. There are no overhead rings or track rides accessible to preschool children. |

**Merry-Go-Rounds**

- | Yes                      | No                       |                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The platform is continuous, approximately circular.                                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no components, including handgrips, that extend beyond the perimeter of the platform. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unless the merry-go-round is tub shaped, there are 1 - 1 ½ inch handgrips available.            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no accessible shearing or crush points.                                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Peripheral speed of rotation is limited to 13 feet per second.                                  |

**Spring Rocking Equipment**

- | Yes                      | No                       |                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The seat accommodates only the intended number of users at one time.                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are hand grips and foot rests for each seating position.                                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Handgrips are between 1 - 1 ½ inches in diameter; minimum length 3 inches for one hand, and 6 inches for two hands. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Foot rests are a minimum width of 3 ½ inches.                                                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Seats are not less than 14 inches nor more than 28 inches above platform surface.                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no log rolls accessible to preschoolers.                                                                  |

**Other Hazards**

- | Yes                      | No                       |                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no litter or animal feces in the play area that may attract insects, hide hazards, and harbor infectious disease agents. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no attractive climbing hazards (such a trees) that are accessible from an object placed underneath them.                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no plants present that are toxic, thorny, attract bees or have seeds or berries that could cause a choking hazard.       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There is a fence that encloses the play area.                                                                                      |

**Please explain your plan to fix or take out of play any items checked “No”.**

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Child Care Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone w/area code: \_\_\_\_\_

***The Early Childhood Education Linkage System (ECELS) - Healthy Child Care PA is a program of the PA Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics. ECELS and the PA AAP do not accept any liability associated with the assessment of play areas.***