

Playground Safety Series



Part Four New Playground Considerations By Colorado School Districts Self Insurance Pool

Trainer Guide

Playground Safety Series Trainer Guide-New Playground Considerations

Introduction

This Playground Safety Series is designed to provide school personnel with an introduction to new playground construction considerations applicable to play equipment and playgrounds. Participants will be introduced to information they may need to consider **before** they begin the new playground construction process. The information provided in this program should be customized to reflect your policies, procedures and management protocols to improve its effectiveness.

The purpose of the new playground considerations series is to provide a safe environment for students and users while on the playground. Making good pre-construction choices may help to prevent accidents and injuries and may prolong the longevity of your playground. Prior planning and preparation may also help establish an effective maintenance and supervision plan for your district. In turn it may help to create a great design that can be used by all children for years to come.

Mission

The Mission of The Colorado School Districts Self Insurance Pool (CSDSIP) is to provide a user friendly format to bring public schools into compliance with the current standards and best practices advanced by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and ASTM Guidelines. These voluntary standards have evolved into the standard of care for designing and managing public playgrounds.

CSDSIP Support

We anticipate that the implementation of the playground safety series may generate a need for a deeper level of understanding for playground risk management or generate more sophisticated questions than are addressed in the training material. The CSDSIP Risk Control Staff are Certified Playground Safety Inspectors and are available to assist you in the development and review of your playground safety program.

Training Objectives

After completing The New Playground Considerations series you will:

- ✓ Understand that new playground construction should follow building permitting processes.
- ✓ Understand that new construction needs to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- ✓ Understand the need for documenting manufacturer's and installer's qualifications.
- ✓ Have a better understanding of the importance of:

- Choosing equipment based on the age of user
- Selection of appropriate site
- Surfacing material choices
- Good installation practices
- Planning for supervision needs
- Planning for the use of signage
- Planning for continued maintenance needs

Administrator Guide

A recent Colorado Supreme Court decision, *Loveland v. St. Vrain SD*, has increased the liability exposure of schools related to the maintenance and safety of their playgrounds. Playgrounds are an important component of the learning environment. Through proper safety inspections and routine maintenance, they may support your educational mission.

Prioritizing Your New Construction Needs

As the playground safety administrator, you should be familiar with your school's playground needs along with the responsibilities of developing a play area that will meet those needs. You should be able to offer guidance to schools looking for pre-construction help. You should recognize the importance of choosing a site and manufacturers and installers that meet current compliance standards.

Documentation

It is important that you document your efforts to make the best pre-construction choices. Good documentation will demonstrate the level of reasonable care used to create and maintain a safe playground. Poor documentation may be held against you as an example of lack of care or concern for safety. You should document that you've chosen manufacturers and/or installers that are following current specifications and guidelines.

It is recommended that documentation be maintained for a long period of time, even years after the equipment is constructed and/or replaced. Children have until the age of majority (two years after they turn 18) to take formal legal action against a school. Keep the documentation on site during the current school year. Anything older can be moved to central location or archived electronically. ***You should review your school's records retention policies and how they address playground inspection and maintenance records.***

Safety inspection and maintenance documentation should be reproduced and secured separately following the report of a severe playground injury. A severe playground injury is an injury that results in a fractured bone, dislocation of a joint, head injury or a laceration requiring stitches.

Administrators should record and maintain record of maintenance staff attendance and participation in playground safety training.

Learning Objectives Review

After the Playground New Construction Considerations series is completed, administrators may use these questions as material review to evaluate the participant's comprehension and understanding.

New Playground Considerations - Question and Answer Session

1. Do the state and county building permitting processes need to be addressed? Yes or No

Answer: Yes. You must follow all state and county permitting processes **before** the building begins.

2. Do I need to address the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for new construction of a playground? Yes or No

Answer: Yes. All new constructed and altered play areas are required to comply with the ADA. Surfacing materials should meet the ADA standards for accessibility (ASTM F 1951). Unobstructed accessible routes connecting accessible elements of the play area must be considered a priority. Play equipment components that generate opportunities for play and socialization for **all** children are key element considerations.

3. What type of surfacing material is **not** ADA Compliant?

Answer: Sand and/or gravel

4. The ages of children using the equipment in the new playground **do not** matter. True or false

Answer: False. Children of different ages have different abilities and needs.

5. Give an example of inappropriate surfacing.

Answer:

Asphalt

Carpet

Dirt

Grass

For ADA purposes, sand and gravel are not appropriate surfacing material choices.

6. What table do you use to help you determine the minimum required depths of loose-fill material needed based on material type and fall height?

Answer:

Table 2. Minimum compressed loose-fill surfacing depth from the Consumer Product Safety Commission Handbook for Public Playground Safety

7. Anyone that the district chooses to install playground equipment is okay? Yes or No

Answer:

No. It would be recommended that qualified installers perform the work. They should be able to install according to the guidelines, standards and manufacturer requirements. They should be able state this in writing and they should be able to provide their own insurance coverage.

8. Playground signage **must** state that supervision is **required**. True or False

Answer: False. Signs should state that supervision is **recommended** not required.

9. Lines of sight in a playground layout will help with supervision abilities? Yes or No

Answer: Yes. Playground should be laid out to allow the caregivers to keep track of the users in the playground environment.

10. Playground equipment maintenance recommendations can very often be found with the manufacturer's information. True or False

Answer: True. This can often be the best resource for inspection information after installation.

Training Specifications

The following sources were utilized in the development of this training program. These sources provide guidelines and/or standards applicable to playgrounds:

- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) Public Playground Safety Handbook
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- ASTM F 1487-Standard Consumer Safety Performance of Playground Equipment for Public Use
- ASTM F 1292- Standard Specifications for Impact Attenuation of Surfacing Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment
- ASTM F 2223-Standard Guild on Playground Surfacing
- ASTM F 2075- Standard Specifications for Engineered Wood Fiber
- ASTM F 1951- Standard Specifications of Determination of Accessibility of Surfacing Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment
- ASTM F 2049 Standard Specifications for Fences/Barriers for Public, Commercial, and Multi Family Residential Use Outdoor Play Areas

Limits of Liability (Disclaimer)

The authors and publishers of this training (document) assume no risk or liability for incident arising from the application of this information in any way. This training (document) should not be construed as a substitute for ASTM Performance Standard US Consumer Safety Commissions Guideline or the Applicable play area safety coded and/or standard of the state or jurisdiction in which the training document is used.

Additional Resources

- [Consumer Product Safety Commission's \(CPSC\) Public Playground Safety Handbook](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- [Colorado Department of Safety – Small Project Submittal Requirements Checklist](#)