

THE INSURANCE ADVISOR

For America's Churches and Related Ministries from Brotherhood Mutual and Its Agents

KEEPING PLAYGROUNDS SAFE

ISSUE 21—WHAT STEPS ARE YOU TAKING TO KEEP YOUR PLAYGROUNDS SAFE?

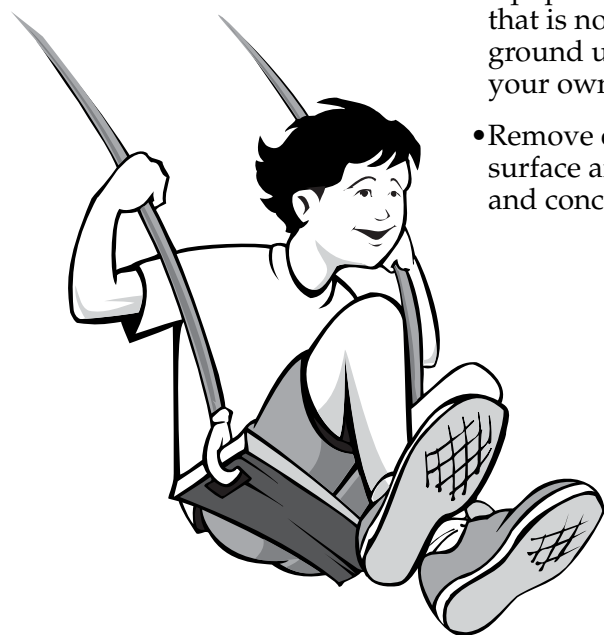
Every year, playground injuries account for over 250,000 reported accidents that require hospital treatment.

Playgrounds provide space for children to explore their physical capabilities and develop social skills. Unfortunately, they can also be the scene of serious accidents.

Although you can't prevent every playground mishap, you can reduce the risk of serious falls and accidents through proper playground design, equipment maintenance, and child supervision.

PLAYGROUND DESIGN

- Use only professionally designed equipment. Don't use anything that is not designed for playground use, and don't design your own equipment.
- Remove equipment from hard surface areas such as asphalt and concrete.



- Cover areas under equipment uniformly with 9 to 12 inches of shock-absorbing surface material. Consult with a local playground equipment dealer for possible options.
- Protect elevated play areas with continuous guardrails—20 inches above ground for preschoolers, 30 inches for school-age children.
- Ensure the space between hand rails and ladder rungs is no larger than 3.5 x 9 inches to prevent head entrapment.
- Anchor your equipment firmly in the ground.
- Ensure swings are spaced at least 2 feet apart and 30 inches from the side poles to prevent crashes.
- Allow adequate spacing between equipment so children can move freely. This will reduce the likelihood of a child being hit by moving equipment or being struck by another child exiting a slide or monkey bars.
- Separate playgrounds from roadways with a fence, wall, or other secure barrier.

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*Did you know?
Falls account for
75 percent of all playground
mishaps. Many of these
injuries can be lessened
through cushioning
surfaces such as
wood chips or sand.*

EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

- Remove equipment associated with frequent injuries.
- Replace heavy swing seats with lightweight seats of canvas or plastic. A free-swinging, empty, heavy swing can cause serious injury if it hits a child's head.
- Clean playgrounds regularly, being alert for hazards such as broken glass or sharp metal objects.
- Regularly inspect equipment for worn or missing parts, loose bolts, sharp edges or points, damaged "s" hooks, and exposed components that could trip, pinch, or crush someone.
- Lubricate moving parts properly and repair or replace splintered or cracked wood.
- Maintain a depth of 9 to 12 inches of smooth gravel, mulch, or other loose material covering your surface area.

CHILD SUPERVISION

- Teach all children to use equipment correctly and to watch for people in front of and behind them. Children younger than 5 should be accompanied by an adult while using playground equipment.
- Keep an eye on children's clothing. Loose ties, hooded sweatshirts, jewelry and shoe laces can get caught on equipment and cause serious injury.
- Make sure play remains under control. Don't let children jump over railings or run near swings.
- Be familiar with and comply with state regulations regarding proper adult-to-child ratios for supervision. The presence of two adults at all times is strongly recommended.
- Plan how you will respond to an injury. Make sure your plan allows for continued supervision while others are assisting the injured child.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PLAYGROUND SAFETY CALL:

**U.S. Consumer Product
Safety Commission**
4330 E. W. Highway
Bethesda, MD 20814
1-800-638-2772
www.cpsc.gov

Consumer Federation of America
1424 16th St. NW, Suite 604
Washington, DC 20036
202-387-6121
www.consumerfed.org

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