

Time to Play Ball!

By Chip McKenna

Spring is here, which means groups will be lining up to use public play fields. Before group play starts, take the time to walk the entire play field and assess the condition so you can develop and prioritize a plan of attack. This is also a great time to check for winter damage and any areas that need special attention.

A poorly maintained play field can pose a number of hazards and injury risks for players and spectators. The primary area of concern is potential trip and fall hazards. For example, someone may step into a gopher hole, trip over debris on the play field, or trip over broken wire fencing at the edge of the field. Clear the field of stones, pieces of glass and other objects or debris. Check areas abutting play fields for hidden debris, tools, cables, etc.

Playing surface - Grass:

- There are no exposed bare spots with hard soil surfaces.
- Soil is well drained with no standing water.
- There are no holes or mounds made by moles, gophers, or other animals.
- There are no ruts or trenches caused by equipment use or field wear.
- Sprinkler heads do not stick up above the dirt level and none are missing or broken.

Playing surface - Synthetic Turf:

- There are no worn areas on the synthetic material.
- Seams are secure.
- The synthetic material is not buckling or bulging.
- Synthetic fibers are standing upright.

Fencing:

- Fence posts are securely set in the ground.
- Fence posts are outside of the playing area.
- There are no concrete footings exposed above ground.
- There are no large gaps in the fencing or between the ground and the fence.
- Top and bottom tension wires are in place to secure the fence.
- The wire ends of the fence are not exposed at the top or corners.
- There are no damaged areas that protrude, are sharp or loose.

A thorough inspection of the entire play field, bleachers, outer buildings and restrooms should be done before the season begins. More information about ballfield guidelines and sample inspection checklists can be found in PAR.09 Ballfields of the Liability Resource Manual. The Liability Resource Manual is available through the Member Resources page on the WCIA website: <http://www.wciapool.org/member-resources>

WCIA Risk Management Representatives are available to answer questions and inspect playgrounds, ball fields, swimming pools, and parks for members. For assistance, please contact your assigned Risk Management Representative.