

Spring into fun: playground safety as the weather gets better

By Kim Dennis

As the days grow longer and the sun shines brighter, families across the region will begin to take full advantage of the warm weather. The return of spring means more time spent outdoors, and for many, that means heading to the playground. As we head outside, it is important to remember that safety should always come first.

Why Playground Safety Matters

While playgrounds provide a space for kids to burn off energy and develop social skills, they also come with potential risks. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 200,000 children under the age of fourteen are treated for playground-related injuries each year. Most of these injuries are the result of falls, with some leading to profound consequences.

As caretakers of playgrounds, members must ensure they are safe and that children can enjoy them without unnecessary risk. Below are a few ways to reduce your risk of a playground incident.

Top Tips for Playground Safety

1. **Inspect the Playground:** Each year members should be conducting an annual audit before the high season begins. During the audit, look for hazards such as head entrapments, sharp points and corners, protrusions, crush and shear points, and the condition of the surfacing material. Any hazards that are identified should be classified into priority, with priority one being the type of hazard that needs your most immediate attention.

In addition to conducting an annual audit, your playgrounds should be inspected and maintained on a regular schedule based off of manufacturer's recommendations and the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) guidelines.

2. **Use Age-Appropriate Play Areas:** Playgrounds often have different sections designated for various age groups (typically, 2-5 years, and 5-12 years). Make sure there is signage indicating which areas are appropriate for which age group.

3. **Check the Surface Material:** Soft surfaces like rubber mats, mulch, or sand help cushion falls. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) determines height ratings for playground equipment, the height rating will assist you in determining the best type of surfacing material to use below the equipment. Be sure that your playground has proper surfacing under swings, slides, and climbing structures, and be sure to examine it while conducting maintenance inspections.

Making Playtime Safe and Fun for All

As the weather turns nice, we all want to enjoy the outdoors and make the most of every sunny day. Playgrounds are a wonderful place to foster a sense of fun, creativity, and physical activity in children, but safety should always be a priority.

For more information, you are encouraged to contact your WCIA Risk Management Representative and review the information available in the WCIA Liability Resource Manual: [PAR.05 Playground Equipment](#).