PACE

SAFETY • SERVICE • SAVINGS
A TRUST BUILT FOR STUDENTS

THIS IS **NOT** LEGAL ADVICE

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

MAINTAINING A SAFE PLAYGROUND

Each year, roughly 200,000 children are treated for playground-related injuries. Many of these injuries could be prevented and resulting claims could be avoided by following established standards and guidelines. These guidelines are outlined in the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's "Handbook for Public Playground Safety" and are based on ASTM F1487-21 which governs technical playground design for designers, manufacturers, architects and installers.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

PROVIDE ADEQUATE SHOCK-ABSORBING MATERIAL

Playground surfacing can either be unitary (poured-in-place, rubber tiles, synthetic turf, etc.) or loose fill (wood chips, engineered wood fiber, shredded rubber, pea gravel, etc.). Any of these can provide adequate shock absorbency if properly installed and maintained, and districts should work with vendors to find the surfacing that best fits their needs and budget. This material should be maintained in a 6-foot radius around all stationary equipment and twice the distance of the fulcrum in both directions for swings. The material in these zones should be installed and maintained at the proper depth for the full height of the equipment and be free of ground hazards. See page two for a list comparing the pros and cons of a variety of surfacing options.

MAINTAIN SAFE HARDWARE

Equipment should be routinely checked for wear, with particular attention paid to eliminating protruding bolts, pinch points and sharp edges. "S" hooks on chains should be completely closed, and chain links showing wear greater than 50% should be removed or the chains replaced. Nuts and bolts should be flush to the structure with no more than two threads exposed. Hardware should always be replaced with manufacturer-recommended parts to prevent creating new hazards.

ELIMINATE HAZARDS

Playgrounds should be designed and maintained to be free of entanglement, entrapment, protrusion, trip, fall and other hazards. Protruding bolts can be entanglement hazards if they have the potential to snag a child's loose clothing and protrusion hazards if they extend where a child could come in contact with them. Openings wide enough for a child's body to enter but too small for their head are entrapment hazards. If hazards cannot be immediately eliminated, the equipment should be taken out of service.

CONDUCT REGULAR INSPECTIONS

One of the most important safeguards is for districts to document regular equipment inspections. This will assist in quickly identifying any hazards arising from normal wear and tear and also document that the hazards were identified and mitigated. Sample checklists are available through the CPSC or by contacting the PACE Risk Management Department at riskmanagement@sdao.com.

For further assistance, PACE Risk Management Consultants are available to conduct thorough assessments of your facilities, helping you identify and mitigate potential risks. If you're interested in scheduling a risk assessment or have any questions, please contact us at riskmanagement@sdao.com.