

PLAYGROUND REPORT CARD

Questions for keeping children safe for all seasons of play.

Does Your Playground Make the Grade?

Check your playground using the following questions. Answer 'Yes' or 'No' for each statement below.

Explanations of the questions are described on the back of this sheet.

	YES	NO
SITE LOCATION		
Location of the playground is protected from motorized hazards		
Children can be easily viewed on equipment and throughout the playground		
The site location is designed to encourage active supervision		
Shade (natural, structure, building) is available at least 70% of time during play		
Signs are posted to check surfacing and equipment temperatures		
APPROPRIATE DESIGN		
The playground area is designed for air movement for increased thermal comfort		
Trees, plants, or other appropriate landscaping is present		
The playground has a variety of play experiences for different ages of children		
Placement of equipment does not interfere with other play activities		
Equipment discourages children from climbing outside the structure		
Platforms allow children to change directions for getting off of the structure		
Accessible routes are present allowing children to access the playground and equipment		
FALL AREA PROTECTION		
Suitable surfacing materials are present		
Appropriate depth of loose fill material is present		
Use zones have appropriate surfacing		
Concrete footings are covered		
Shade limits temperatures of surfaces during prolonged sun exposure		
ENVIRONMENT & EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE		
Environment is inviting to users		
Environment is well-maintained		
The playground and equipment are free from foreign objects		
Equipment is free from strangulation hazards		
Equipment is free of head entrapment hazards		
Equipment is free of protruding bolts and fixtures		
Equipment is free of broken or missing parts		
TOTAL POINTS		

SCORING SYSTEM

For every 'Yes' your playground receives one point. Total up the number of points for each section.

Site Location _____

Appropriate Design _____

Fall Area Protection _____

Equipment Maintenance _____

Total _____

A: 19-24

Congratulations, you have a SAFE and thermally comfortable playground.

B: 18-16

The playground is on its way to providing a safe and thermally comfortable play area. Work on the areas checked 'No'.

C: 12-15


The playground is potentially not thermally comfortable or has unsafe conditions. Take corrective measures.

D: 7-11

Children are at risk. Start today to make plans for improvements.

F: 6 & below

Make safety changes immediately.

If any of the boxes highlighted in this color  are marked 'NO', the potential of a life-threatening injury is significantly increased. Contact the owner/operator.



NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR PLAY AREA SAFETY

EXPLANATION OF RISK FACTOR CRITERIA

SITE LOCATION

1. The location of the playground is critical. Eliminate life threatening hazards.
2. In order to properly supervise, children need to be seen and heard. This question is asking if there are any blind spots where children can hide out of the sight of the supervisor.
3. Since equipment can't supervise children, the layout and site location are designed to allow for supervision.
4. During summer months, exposure to sun can heat surfaces. Shade can improve thermal comfort and cool the playground area.
5. Signs posted can be used to give guidance and to inform user to check the temperature of surface materials prior to play.

APPROPRIATE DESIGN

1. Air movement affects thermal comfort by increasing evaporative loss through the skin and heat transfer between the body and the surrounding environment. During warm seasons, air movement can improve thermal comfort.
2. Trees and landscaping can improve thermal comfort by reducing solar radiation and lowering air and surface temperature.
3. It is recommended playgrounds have separate areas with appropriately sized equipment and materials to serve ages 2-5 and ages 5-12. In playgrounds designed to serve children of all ages, the layout of pathways and the landscaping should support age-appropriate play and thermal comfort.
4. Placement of equipment, such as swings, moving equipment, etc. do not interfere with other play experiences.
5. Either guardrails or protective barriers may be used to prevent inadvertent or unintentional falls off elevated platforms. To provide greater protection, protective barriers are designed to prevent intentional attempts by children.
6. Platforms over 6 ft | 1.8 meters provide an intermediate standing surface where a decision can be made to halt the ascent or to pursue an alternative means of descent.
7. An accessible route is a continuous, unobstructed path that connects all accessible spaces and elements.

FALL AREA PROTECTION

1. Research has shown equipment height can double the probability of a child getting injured. Falls from 1 foot | 30.48 centimeters onto concrete could cause a concussion. Therefore, the use zone of elevated play equipment has a protective surface. Appropriate surfaces are either a playground surfacing loose-fill or unitary material. Inappropriate surface materials are asphalt, concrete, dirt, or grass.
2. Proper depth of playground surfacing must be at the appropriate depth to cushion falls. An inch of sand upon hard packed dirt will not provide any protection. 12 inches | 30.48 centimeters of loose fill material under and around playground equipment is a good idea for initial installment.
3. Appropriate surfacing should be located directly underneath equipment and extend 6 ft | 1.8 meters in all directions with the exception of slides and swings, which have a longer use zone.
4. Concrete footings around any of the equipment should not be exposed. Deaths or permanent disabilities have occurred from children falling off equipment and striking their heads on exposed footings.
5. During warm months and sunny days, shade is essential in preventing surfaces from overheating.

ENVIRONMENT & EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

1. The playground is inviting, inclusive, safe and secure, and thermally comfortable.
2. The playground has been maintained. Clean playgrounds for children are more visually appealing. Plastic equipment may crack or develop holes due to temperature extremes and/or vandalism. Wood structures must be treated on a regular basis to avoid weather related problems such as splinters.
3. Foreign objects, such as trash, loose ropes, drawstrings, and helmets can lead to injuries and unsafe situations. Trash can attract pests that carry diseases. Litter can disrupt wildlife habitats and food sources. Sharp objects like broken glass can be a safety hazard.
4. Strangulation is the leading cause of playground fatalities. Deaths have occurred when drawstrings on sweatshirts, coats, and other clothing get caught in gaps. Pay close attention to the area on top of slides and swings.
5. Entrapment places include between guardrails and underneath merry-go-rounds. Head entrapment occurs when the body fits through a space but the child's head cannot pass through the same space. This occurs because generally, young children's heads are larger than their bodies. If the space between two parts (usually guardrails) is more than 3.5 inches | 8.89 centimeters then it must be greater than 9 inches | 22.86 centimeters to avoid potential entrapment.
6. Protruding bolts or fixtures can cause problems with children running into equipment or catching clothing. Therefore, they pose a potential safety hazard.
7. Broken or missing equipment pieces are accidents waiting to happen. If a piece of equipment is broken, measures need to be taken to repair the piece. Children should be kept off the equipment until repaired.

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