



for the playground

## Identifying Playground Hazards

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Injuries to children on the playground can be the result exposure to environmental hazards as well as playground equipment hazards. A good playground supervisor learns to identify such hazards and takes steps to remedy them.

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Playground personnel should take the time to conduct pre-play site inspections before each use of the playground. Changes are constantly occurring as a result of climate, use, and/or vandalism. During a pre-play inspection the supervisor should look for anything that seems out of order or abnormal. When problems are found that are beyond the scope of the playground supervisor to correct, report and document these hazards for corrective action by the district. If the hazard is serious enough the playground or a portion of it may need to be closed. Look for:

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### Environmental Hazards

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- Playground is free from animals, nests, and animal droppings
- Look for foreign objects such as broken glass, nails, rocks, broken tree branches and trash
- Play areas are free from tripping hazards (abrupt changes in surface elevations, holes, molehills, containment borders, tree roots and stumps, rocks)
- Loose materials (sand, gravel, bark chips) on sidewalks and pavement game areas that may cause a child to slip and fall
- Safety surfacing is intact with no ruts or deep depressions
- All loose-fill surfacing materials are at their appropriate depth
- Exposed concrete footing
- Weather caused hazards (excessive heat, large puddles, ice)
- Obstructed views

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### Equipment Hazards

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- Broken, missing, damaged, or excessive wear of parts or hardware
- Sharp points, corners and edges
- Places that might pinch or crush fingers
- Wood is free of rot, splinters, warping and cracking; plastics free of cracks
- No missing or damaged protective caps and plugs
- All equipment is securely anchored
- Structural members are sound and securely fastened
- No protrusions- Nuts, bolts, and screws should be recessed or covered
- Swing chains are not twisted and are free of excessive wear; seats are in good condition
- Slide bed way and rails are smooth and clear of debris
- Clothing entanglement hazards
- Enclosed openings in equipment that could entrap a child head or body
- Elevated surfaces such as platforms, ramps and bridgeways should have guardrails or barriers

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Tip: Always keep children off of the equipment if there is any doubt or concern about its integrity, and report the concern to the principal.

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Tip: Daily raking and leveling helps keep loose-fill surfacing material in good shape for play.

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Tip: SafeSchools on-line course *-Playground Maintenance & Inspection* gives an overview of the fundamentals of preventing playground hazards. Take a look.

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