CAUTION: KIDS AT PLAY

*A child is injured every 2-1/2 minutes on a public playground*

I. **Overview**

Public playground equipment continues to be a major cause of injury for children ages 2-12 and falls account for approximately 75% of all playground-related injuries according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Age</th>
<th>Under 6</th>
<th>Over 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swings</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slides</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An interesting point about these statistics is they follow a child’s growth. Slides are the most frequent cause of injury to children under the age of 6, resulting in mostly head injuries, as climbers are the leading cause for older more cognitive children who tend to have upper limb fractures as they instinctively protect their heads in a fall.

To help us, the National Playground Safety Institute, (NPSI) sponsored by the National Recreation and Park Association, has been established to promote children's right to play and promote nationally the importance play has in a child's development. NPSI accomplishes this by providing the most current comprehensive training program on public playground safety, including the development and distribution of playground training and safety products.

II. **Basic Safety Tips for Parents / Guardians / Child Care Centers:**

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) offers consumers the following playground safety tips that we can apply to our child’s play areas:

- **Protective Surfacing** - Since almost 76% of all injuries are caused by falls to the ground, protective surfacing under and around all playground equipment is the most critical safety factor on playgrounds.
Below is a chart that helps identify how substances can help reduce fall injuries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Material</th>
<th>6&quot; Depth</th>
<th>9&quot; Depth</th>
<th>12&quot; Depth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Double Shredded Bark Mulch</td>
<td>6 ft</td>
<td>10 ft</td>
<td>11 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Chips</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Sand</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Gravel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Fall Zones** – Each piece of play equipment should have a well-defined fall zone and this area should be free of other equipment and obstacles onto which a child might fall. In general, a fall zone should extend a minimum of 6’ in all directions from the perimeter of the equipment.

- **Swing Spacing** - To prevent injuries from impact with moving swings, swings should not be too close together or too close to support structures. As a visual guide, there should only be 2 swings per bay and you as an adult should be able to easily walk between the swings and supports to verify proper spacing.

- **Elevated Surfaces** - Platforms more than 30” (approximately waist high) above the ground should have guardrails to prevent falls.

- **Potential Head Entrapment Hazards** - In general, openings that are closed on all sides, should be less than 3-1/2” (closed fist) or greater than 9” (chin to top of an adult’s head). Openings that are within this range present a head entrapment hazard because they are large enough to permit a child's body to go through, but are too small to permit the head to go through.

- **Potential Entanglement Hazards** - Open "S" hooks, especially on swings, and any protrusions or equipment components/hardware which may act as hooks or catch-points can catch children's clothing and cause strangulation incidents. Hooded sweatshirts have exposed kids to this danger.

- **Pinch or Crush Points** - There should be no exposed moving parts which may present a pinching or crushing hazard. An example of this is found on chain bridges and the space between stairs and decks.

### III. Playground Maintenance and Safety Surveys:

Playgrounds should be inspected on a regular basis. Surveys should be documented, especially if you see any deficiencies. If any of the following conditions are noted, they should be removed, corrected or repaired immediately to prevent injuries:

- Hardware that is loose or worn, or that has protrusions or projections.
- Exposed equipment footings.
- Scattered debris, litter, rocks, or tree roots.
- Rust and chipped paint on metal components.
- Splinters large cracks, and decayed wood components.
- Deterioration and corrosion on structural components which connect to the ground.
- Missing or damaged equipment components, such as handholds, guardrails, swing seats.

Sponsored by the National Recreation and Park Association, The National Playground Safety Institute's Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) designation provides the most comprehensive training program on playground hazard identification and risk management methods offered.

_For more information or to schedule an on-site consultation with a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) please call B.Safe Consulting at (860) 508-4981_