

Protecting Our Parishes, Missions, and Schools

Playground Safety Series



Supervision Checklist, Knowing the Playground Basics

Because all playgrounds present some challenge and because children can be expected to use equipment in unintended and unanticipated ways, adult supervision must be required.

Playground supervisors should be aware that not all playground equipment is appropriate for all the children who may use the playground. Supervisors should understand that appropriate signs should be posted identifying the age-specific playground for which it is intended. Supervisors must determine the suitability of the equipment for the children they are supervising. Toddlers and preschool-age children require more attentive supervision than older children; however, one should not rely on supervision alone to prevent injuries.

Supervisors Should Understand the Basics of Playground Safety

Appropriate Equipment—The play areas should be organized into different sections to prevent injuries caused by conflicting activities and children running between these activities. There should be separate playground areas designed for children ages 1-2, 2-5 and 5-12. These designated areas must have appropriate signs identifying the age group.

Protective Surfacing—The surfaces under and around play equipment should be soft enough to cushion falls from the highest part of the playground equipment. For most playgrounds, these surfaces should contain a minimum of 9 to 12 inches of engineered wood fiber, wood chips, poured-in-place rubber, sand or pea gravel. Wood chips and mulch must be routinely agitated as not to become compacted. The surfacing should have a bounce to it when walked upon.



Proper fall zone and cushioning material.

Fall Zones—To cushion a fall, the shock-absorbing material should extend out a minimum of six feet in all directions from stationary pieces of play equipment. In front of and behind swings, the material should extend a distance equal to twice the height of the suspending bar and no intrusions of other equipment, fencing, trees, etc., within the fall zones.



Equipment Design—Metal slides should not be exposed to direct sunlight. The equipment should also have slip-resistant surfaces where children climb. Check for broken equipment and make sure children don't play on it.

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Homemade play equipment is prohibited in public play grounds.

Equipment Spacing—Moving pieces of equipment should be located in an area away from other play structures so children have adequate room to pass from one play area to another without being struck by a moving swing or by another child exiting from a slide.

Catch Points—

There should not be dangerous pieces of hardware, such as protruding bolt ends and narrow gaps in metal connections or open “S” hooks at the top and bottom of swings. Exposed hardware can cut children, puncture skin or catch clothing drawstrings, which could strangle a child. Also, ropes should be anchored securely at both ends so that they will not loop around a child’s body.



Open “S” Hooks and Defective Seat.

Openings That Can Trap—

Openings in guardrails, and spaces between platforms and between ladder rungs, should measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches. Children can get trapped and strangled in openings where they can fit their bodies, but not their heads through the space.



Loose bolt poses pinch hazard.

Children Behavior—

Make sure children are wearing foot wear. Watch and stop dangerous horseplay, such as children throwing protective surfacing materials, climbing above the equipment, jumping from heights, etc. Watch for and stop children from wandering away from the play area.



Note damaged equipment that could cause injury to children and opening that can become an entrapments hazard.

These basic recommendations will contribute to greater playground safety.



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Playground Supervisors Basic Checklist

- Appropriate Equipment**—The play area should be organized into different sections to prevent injuries caused by conflicting activities and children running between activities. There should be separate playground areas designed for children ages 1-2, 2-5 and 5-12.
- Protective Surfacing**—The surfaces under and around play equipment should be soft enough to cushion falls. For most playground equipment, these surfaces should contain a minimum of 9 to 12 inches of engineered wood fiber, wood chips, poured-in-place rubber, rubber chips, sand or pea gravel. Certain synthetic surfaces can be used if they have been proven safe.
- Fall Zones**—To cushion a fall, the shock-absorbing material should extend a minimum of six feet in all directions from stationary pieces of play equipment. In front of and behind swings, the material should extend a distance equal to twice the height of the suspending bar.
- Equipment Design**—Metal slides should not be exposed to direct sunlight. The equipment should also have slip-resistant surfaces where children climb. Check for broken equipment and make sure children don't play on it.
- Equipment Spacing**—Moving pieces of equipment should be located in an area away from other play structures so children have adequate room to pass from one play area to another without being struck by a moving swing or by another child exiting from a slide.
- Catch Points**—There should not be dangerous pieces of hardware, such as protruding bolt ends and narrow gaps in metal connections, or open "S" hooks at the top and bottom of swings. Exposed hardware can cut children, puncture skin or catch clothing drawstrings, which could strangle a child. Also, ropes should be anchored securely so that they will not loop around a child's body.
- Openings That Can Trap**—Openings in guardrails, and spaces between platforms and between ladder rungs, should measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches. Children can get trapped and strangled in openings where they can fit their bodies, but not their heads through the space.
- Children Behavior**—Make sure children are wearing foot wear. Watch and stop dangerous horseplay, such as children throwing protective surfacing materials, climbing above the equipment, jumping from heights, etc. Watch for and stop children from wandering away from the play area.

This basic checklist will contribute to have a safer playground.

Please check all the items above. Sign and date once completed. Return checklist to the school principal or staff personnel responsible to file the playground inspection records.

Signature of person completing the inspection: _____

Name of person completing the inspection: _____

Date inspection completed: _____

Inspection reviewed by: _____

Parish/School Name: _____