

Playground Usage Guidelines

The following information is designed to provide you with some assistance in the development of safe and appropriate guidelines for playground activities. How safe is your church playground?

General Safety Rules

1. All games should be approved and played in appropriate areas.
2. Any danger areas on the playground should be so designated. These danger areas may include, for example, a softball diamond if a game is in progress. Children should be instructed to stand clear of these danger areas and the participants in the softball game should also be given safety instructions including, "Do not throw the bats!"
3. All games should be appropriate to the grade level of the participants.
4. All playground activities must be supervised.
5. The best safety policy is good construction and instruction!
6. No tackle football, ice hockey or other high hazard sports during recess.

General Apparatus Guidelines

1. Do not carry objects while climbing on equipment.
2. Bars and rings are for children who can reach them without help.
3. At least one hand must be in contact with the apparatus at all times. Hands are the last part of the body to leave the apparatus.
4. Apparatus should be dry when in use.
5. Children should be taught to hang and drop, bending the knees upon landing, as the proper method to dismount from the apparatus.
6. Do not sit on the apparatus.
7. Do not play under the apparatus.
8. Use warm water to release skin from metal during freezing temperatures.

Rings

1. Rings are to be used for “traveling;” never for acrobatic gymnastic stunts.
2. One child must get half way around before a second child starts.
- 3, Only one child should be on the approach board at a time.
4. Children should drop from ring to sand or approved surface below when their turn is completed. They should not swing out over the blacktop or other concrete surfaces and release their grip.

Bars

1. Grasp the bars with both hands. Use overhand, reverse, or mixed grip.
2. Pull-ups, chin-ups, and twining the body over the bar are good conditioning activities.
3. Never stand on bars or attempt to jump off.

Jungle Gym/Climbers

1. Never hang by the knees, stand on the top, or jump from the jungle gym.
2. Children should have both hands in contact with the jungle gym and should not interfere with other children while climbing.

Horizontal Ladder

1. Travel on the ladder should proceed in the same line of direction.
2. One child should be halfway across before a second child starts.
3. Children should not sit or stand on top of the ladder.

Slides

1. Climb up the ladder, one step at a time and one child at a time.
2. Slide down in a sitting position. feet forward.
3. No straddling slide, going down backwards, or on side.
4. Bottom should remain on slide at all times.

5. Metal slides should be checked to assure a safe surface temperature during hot weather.

Geodesic Domes

1. Use should be restricted to fourth grade and higher.
2. Games such as “chase,” “tag,” and “train” should not be permitted.
3. Children should not play on the surface under the dome.
4. You should have at least three body parts in contact with the dome at all times, such as two arms and one leg.

Bats and Balls

1. Volleyballs and basketballs are not to be kicked.
2. Bat handles are to be taped. Bats must be checked for cracked or worn places.
3. Bats are not to be swung, except in approved areas.
4. Bats are not to be thrown. (Show children the proper way to drop the bat before running the bases.)
5. Persons catching or umpiring behind the batter should wear masks.

Swings

1. Children must maintain a sitting position while the swing is in motion. No jumping from swing while it is in motion.
2. There should be only one child per swing.
3. Motion of the swing should only be forward or backward. No twisting or twirling.
4. Peers should not play near swings when they are in motion.

Tire Swings

1. Children must maintain a sitting position while the swing is in motion. No jumping from swing while it is in motion.
2. There should be only one child per swing.
3. Peers should not play near swings when they are in motion.
4. Report defects to Maintenance immediately.

First Aid Kits

First Aid kits must always be taken and carried by a staff person when on the playground. First aid kits carry items that post potential risks to children and are not to be placed on a bench or other area where they are in reach of children or can be picked up by others.. "Fanny Packs" work well for most small first aid kits. The typical first aid kit (Fanny Pack) should have the following components (minimum):

- latex gloves,
- first aid booklet,
- roll surgical tape,
- scissors,
- Band aids,
- Kleenex,
- small bottle instant hand sanitizer,
- small and medium sizes bandages (suitable for small cuts, bums, scrapes, etc.).

Playground Design

Location

Make sure all play areas are protected from streets and traffic.

Locate equipment on playground so that boys and girls traveling to and from the equipment will not:

- a) Cross in front of vehicular traffic,
- b) Cross through areas where organized games are being played,
- c) Cross through areas where they may interfere with or be injured by other play equipment.

Make sure that fences or other barriers prevent children from running into traffic or parking areas.

Locate equipment with the playground border so there is adequate separation from other equipment, structures, trees, bushes and hard surfaces.

Check with equipment manufacturer for recommended distances of separation.

Orient equipment so that access and exit points do not conflict with circulation patterns and the access and exit points of other equipment.

Orient equipment to minimize excessive heat build-up on metal surfaces. (Example: Slides should face the north.)

Check the playground area for poisonous plants and make sure they are completely removed.

Equipment

Carefully consider what equipment is suitable for various age groups. Remember that not all playground equipment is designed for every age child. Make sure that new ministry employees or volunteer workers are instructed as to which pieces of equipment are approved for use by each age group.

Playground surfacing is one of the most critical safety measures on playgrounds today. Most serious playground injuries come from falls. Grass is not an acceptable surface for “fall zones” around slides, swings and other pieces of playground equipment. Some examples of acceptable surfaces are: wood chips, coarse sand, small pea gravel, and shredded rubber tires. There is also the option of commercial surfaces that offer some protection from falls. Prior to building a playground you should consult an architect familiar with playground issues. Next month’s issue of the *Church Risk Management Journal* will deal extensively with playground surfacing.

***Carefully supervise children closely at all times
to prevent misuse of the equipment***