



# THE DAILY DOZEN

A 12-Point Playground  
Safety Checklist





As parents and caregivers, we are responsible for providing and ensuring safe play opportunities for our children. By familiarizing yourself with the “Daily Dozen Playground Safety Checklist” you can learn to help identify safety hazards and help keep our children safe.

Should you notice any of the following hazards on your child’s playground, immediately notify the owner/operator about the condition of the play areas, so that they may take the necessary steps to eliminate those hazards.

# NRPA's The Daily Dozen

## A 12-Point Playground Safety Checklist

### 1. PROPER SURFACING

The surface under and around playground equipment should be soft enough to cushion a fall. Maintaining proper surfacing is one of the most important factors in reducing the likelihood of playground injuries. Surfacing should be checked routinely for trip hazards, kick-out (displacement), debris and proper drainage. When selecting playground surfacing it is important to ensure your surfacing meets the requirements of the ADA standards.

#### *Acceptable surfaces include:*

- engineered wood fiber
- wood chips
- sand
- pea gravel
- synthetic/rubber tiles
- shredded rubber
- mats
- poured-in-place
- impact attenuating synthetic turf

#### *Unacceptable surfaces include:*

- concrete
- blacktop
- packed earth
- grass

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Temperature, UV rays, and climate conditions can effect the shock absorbing properties of playground surfacing.

### 2. ACCESSIBILITY

Equipment selection and location along with the type of protective surfacing are key components to ensuring opportunities for children with disabilities to play on the playground. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires newly constructed playgrounds and existing playgrounds that are altered to comply with the provisions set forth in the ADA guidelines. These guidelines establish minimum accessibility requirements including access and accessible routes, variety and number of play opportunities and appropriate surfacing beneath all accessible components.

### 3. ADEQUATE SUPERVISION

Play areas should be designed so it is easy for a parent or caregiver to observe the children at play. Posted signs on the playground should be easily viewable by supervisors. Supervisors should understand the basics of playground safety.

#### 4. AGE APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT

It is important to make sure the equipment in the playground setting is appropriate for the age of the intended user. Signs and labels must be posted indicating the age of the user for which equipment is intended. The US Consumer Product Safety Commission does not recommend the following for preschool users – free-standing arch climbers, free-standing flexible climbers, chain and cable walks, fulcrum seesaws, log rolls or vertical sliding poles.

#### 5. PROPER EQUIPMENT

Some playground equipment is not recommended for use on public playgrounds, these include: trampolines, swinging gates, heavy metal swings, free swinging ropes, swinging exercise rings and trapeze bars.

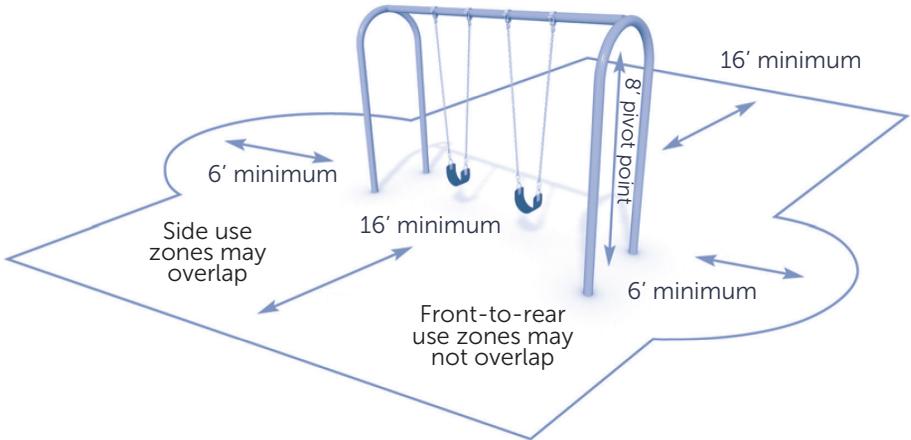
**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Overhead hanging rings that have a short chain (7" or less) are allowed on public playground equipment.

#### 6. ADEQUATE USE ZONES

Use zones are the area around playground equipment onto which a child would fall. A minimum of 72" is required around all playground equipment. Depending on the type of equipment and motion involved, many pieces of equipment require larger use zones. Use zones must have proper surfacing.

##### *Equipment Spacing and Use Zones*

Use zones in front and to the rear of swings should be twice the height of the pivot point of the swing. An 8'-high swing should have a 16' use zone in both directions

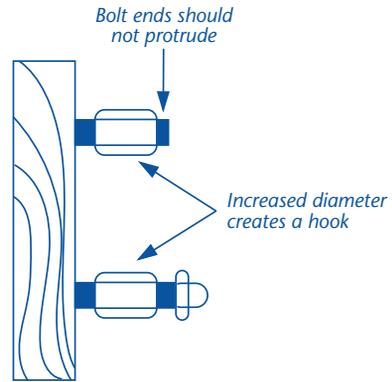


## 7. PROTRUSION AND ENTANGLEMENT HAZARDS

A protrusion hazard is a component or piece of hardware that is capable of impaling or cutting a child, if a child should fall against the hazard. Some protrusions are also capable of catching strings or clothing. This type of entanglement is especially hazardous because it can result in strangulation.

**Examples of protrusion and entanglement hazards include:**

- bolts that extend more than two threads beyond the face of the nut
- hardware configuration that forms a hook
- open "S" hooks; rungs or handholds that protrude outward



## 8. HEAD AND NECK ENTRAPMENT

All enclosed or partially enclosed openings must be checked for potential head or neck entrapment. Generally, there should be no openings on playground equipment that measures between 3.5 and 9 inches. Pay special attention to openings at the top of slides, between platforms and on climbers.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Children should always remove their bike helmet before playing on a playground to protect against entanglement or entrapment.

Check for entanglement hazards at the entrance to the slide bedway

Guardrails and enclosures on elevated platforms

Enclosed openings measuring between 3.5" and 9" should be checked for head entrapment hazards

6' minimum

6' minimum  
8' maximum

6' minimum



## 9. TRIP HAZARDS

Playgrounds with high use should be scanned daily for trip hazards, including:

- exposed concrete footings
- abrupt changes in surface elevation
- tree roots
- tree stumps
- rocks

## 10. CRUSH, SHEAR AND SHARP EDGES HAZARDS

Components on the playground should be kept free of sharp edges and moving components should be checked for the potential of crush and shear injuries. To determine if there is a possible crush or shear point, consider the likelihood a child could get a body part inside the point and the closing force around the point.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Crush and shear hazards are found in locations where parts move against each other or against a fixed part such as on fulcrum see-saws, suspension bridges, track rides, swings, whirls, and roller slides.

## 11. PROPER MAINTENANCE

In order for playgrounds to remain safe, a program of systematic, preventive maintenance should be in place. Routine inspection of playground areas include checking equipment for broken or missing pieces, cracks, rust or deterioration, and loose anchoring. As well as checking surfacing for debris, displacement, proper drainage and checking surrounding environment for trash, vandalism and modifications.

## 12. INSPECTED BY A CERTIFIED INSPECTOR

Part of a sound risk management plan should include having your playground inspected routinely by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI). CPSIs are certified as knowledgeable on the most current playground safety standards and guidelines and must maintain their certification every three years.



**Certified  
Playground  
Safety Inspector**

# BECOME A CERTIFIED PLAYGROUND SAFETY INSPECTOR



The best way to recognize and prevent potential playground hazards is to be properly trained by becoming a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI). This nationally recognized certification will not only help you ensure children have safe places to play, it will also allow you to:

- Open the door to a new career opportunity inspecting playgrounds
- Be associated with NRPA's strong and long-standing reputation in playground safety
- Protect your business or other businesses from costly liabilities
- Confidently inspect the safety of playgrounds based on national standards and guidelines

**GET CERTIFIED TO PROTECT YOUR PLAYGROUNDS.  
TAKE THE COURSE ONLINE OR IN A CLASSROOM NEAR YOU.**

[WWW.NRPA.ORG/CPSI](http://WWW.NRPA.ORG/CPSI)

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- For a free copy of the **US Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) Handbook for Public Playground Safety**, visit [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)
  - **The American Society for Testing and Materials International (ASTM)** developed a standard for the manufacturing of public playground equipment, F1487 Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use. For a copy of this standard, visit [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org)
  - **For the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design** and other federal accessibility information, visit [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)
  - **International Playground Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA)** is a non-profit organization that provides a voluntary third-party certification program to validate conformance to the ASTM F1487 Playground Equipment Standard and the ASTM F1292 Playground Surfacing Standard. For more information, visit [www.ipema.org](http://www.ipema.org)
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The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of more than 50,000 recreation and park professionals and citizens, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space.