



Playing It Safe: A Fifth Nationwide Survey of Public Playgrounds

FINDINGS

The investigation focused on the hazards that cause the most serious playground injuries, and found the following:

- **In 2000, 80% of the 1,024 playgrounds surveyed lacked adequate protective surfacing.** This is a decrease from the 87% that lacked protective surfacing in 1998. We are particularly encouraged by the decrease in the number of playgrounds with hard surfaces, the least forgiving with respect to injury. Protective surfacing is the **most critical safety factor** on playgrounds because approximately 75% of all injuries are caused by falls.
- **In 2000, 31% of slides and climbing equipment surveyed did not have an adequate fall zone** under and around the play equipment. Other equipment and obstacles in the fall zone pose hazards where a child might fall.
- **In 2000, 48% of playgrounds had climbers and 36% had slides where the height of the play equipment is greater than 6 feet high,** which is higher than necessary for play value, and only serves to increase the risk of injury.
- **In 2000, 13% of playgrounds with swings had swing seats that are made of wood, metal or other rigid material,** which increases the severity of injury if impact occurs.
- **In 2000, 27% of playgrounds with swings had some swings that were either too close together or too close to swing supports,** which increases the risk that a child could be hit by a moving swing.
- **In 2000, in 34% of playgrounds, improperly sized openings in the play equipment posed a head entrapment hazard** that may lead to strangulation.
- **In 2000, in 38% of playgrounds, small gaps, open S-hooks and other protrusions posed clothing entanglement hazards, in particular drawstrings on clothing.** This figure represents a significant decline from 1996, when 47% of playgrounds had clothing entanglement hazards.
- **In 2000, 38% of playgrounds had unacceptable dangerous equipment, such as chain or cable walks, animal swings, individual climbing ropes or exercise rings.**
- **In 2000, 47% of all playgrounds had peeling, chipped or cracking paint on equipment surfaces.**