



Risk Management Considerations for Playground Safety at Daycare Facilities

Who is Responsible for Playground Safety?

The organization or company who owns the playground is ultimately responsible for the safety of the playground including all installed equipment. There are no enforced standards in Canada, however the 'Canadian Standards Association (CSA)' is a voluntary standard developed for organizations, municipalities and business owners to use as a reference to ensure a safe play environment for children of all ages.

Although there is no enforcement agency for playground safety in Canada, many jurisdictions have passed by-laws/regulations requiring public playground operators take the necessary steps to ensure compliance of the CSA Standards. In many provinces, municipalities require daycare operators to ensure their playgrounds are CSA compliant in order to obtain an operating license.

It should also be noted that although the CSA standards are voluntary, if a playground operator can show their playground is CSA compliant and follows an organized maintenance and inspection program they will be more likely to illustrate that they have exercised their 'due diligence'.

How can Owners/Operators Address Safety Effectively on Existing Playgrounds?

Many operators may not be financially able to replace an entire playground, however this option is not always necessary. Updates to playground surfacing or specific equipment may prove to be acceptable. Life threatening and/or very serious hazards should be looked after as soon as possible.

The following steps are recommended:

- Assess your playground, preferably with the help of a CSA certified playground practitioner/inspector.
- Create a written plan to address any hazards that are found during the inspection.
- Remove or repair all serious, life-threatening hazards ASAP.
- Create a plan to upgrade/repair other injury hazards within a reasonable time frame.
- Create a plan to ensure the entire playground is CSA compliant within a reasonable time frame.

- Create a plan to inspect and maintain the playground on a regular basis.
- A safe, well maintained protective surface should be a top priority.

Playground Organization & Supervision

Organization: No matter the size of the playground, the supervising staff should have a system in place to ensure they know where to find first-aid kits, injury reporting forms and have a cell phone or telephone nearby during hours of supervision. Staff should also ensure that there aren't any unattended toys surrounding the play equipment as they could serve as a trip and fall hazard causing further injury.

Supervision: How many supervisors are required? Supervise your playgrounds as you work your classroom. Teachers/supervisors need to explain the playground rules and be attentive at all times to children using the equipment as well as on the playground itself.

Most Common Hazards on the Playground

- Falls to inappropriate surfacing material.
- Inadequate space for use of equipment.
- Protrusion and entanglement hazards.
- Entrapment in openings.
- Insufficient spacing between equipment.
- Trip hazards.
- Lack of supervision.
- Age-inappropriate activities.
- Lack of maintenance.
- Sharp-edge hazards.
- Platforms without guardrails.
- Equipment not recommended for playgrounds.