

Playground Equipment

The safety of children who frequent playgrounds doesn't solely depend on the initial design of the site and the selection of equipment. It is a fundamental principle that after the initial commissioning of the equipment, continued management, provision of an effective inspection regime and a suitable maintenance programme are essential to continued safety.

Playgrounds must be safe by design and location when first installed and remain safe in all future circumstances

According to RoSPA - The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents - it is estimated that there are approximately 40,000 injuries to children on playgrounds each year, which result in a hospital visit. Accident statistics show that injuries appear to fall into categories relating to the management of the site and/or to actions by the users of the site:

Recorded incidents relating to management of the site and equipment include:

- poor equipment design or failure to comply to quality standards
- poor design and layout
- unsuitable equipment for the intended age group
- incorrect installation
- poor inspection
- poor maintenance.

Playground Law

Playground managers/owners have legal responsibilities by virtue of their general duties under both The Health & Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) and The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (1999). The former making specific reference to safeguarding members of the public. They must take 'reasonable' care to ensure their playgrounds are safe, thus avoiding accidents that are 'reasonably foreseeable'.



Inspections

Initial and periodic inspections

Regular inspections by staff should cover the whole of the site - not just the equipment including: pathways, fences, seats etc. all need to be checked. At each and every inspection the Impact Absorbing Surfacing should be carefully checked for their soundness and condition. It is recommended that staff carrying out these regular inspections should have undertaken some basic training in playground inspections. Contractors should be able to provide evidence of such training.

Annual inspection

A specialist - not connected with the playground operator or manager - should carry out a full annual inspection. This inspection should include a report on:

- vandalism
- wear & tear
- long-term structural problems
- changes in standards compliance and design practice
- a complete risk assessment.

Such inspections are offered by Vulcan Inspection Services, for more information please contact your local NFU Mutual office or contact us direct on:

01789 202 560

e-mail: vulcan.inspectionsservices@uk.rsagroup.com

web: www.vulcaninspectionsservices.co.uk

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