



Louie
Delaware

The Home
Safety Guru

Playground Safety For Children

In the time it will take you to read this information a child will be severely injured and admitted to an emergency room as a result of a playground-related accident. According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, it is estimated that each year over 170,000 such injuries occur. Approximately twenty children will die from playground related injuries.

Most of these injuries occur at a home, whether the child's or a friend's. Many people who install play equipment don't take the time to ensure that the entire play environment is safe.

The National Playground Safety Institute (NPSI) has identified the leading causes of injury on playgrounds. By familiarizing yourself with this list, you can inspect your own or local playground to see how safe it is. As parents and caregivers, we are responsible for providing safe play opportunities for our children. Should you identify any of the following hazards on your child's playground, don't allow your child to play there until it has been made safer.

Some things parents should consider when inspecting a playground include:

- **Ensuring that there is shock-absorbing surface around the play equipment** – For play equipment that is up to 7 feet above the ground, there should be at least 9 inches of wood chips, mulch, or shredded rubber. For play equipment up to 5 feet above the ground, there should be at least 9 inches of sand, pea gravel, wood chips, mulch or shredded rubber. Or, use surfacing mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials. And ensure that the protective shock-absorbing surface goes at least 6 feet in all directions from the play equipment.
- **Ropes** - Never attach or allow children to attach ropes, jump ropes, clotheslines, or pet leashes to play equipment as children can strangle on these.
- **Use of Safe Hardware.** Check for hardware, like open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends, which can be hazardous.
- **Check for Spaces that Could Trap Children.** All openings, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs; spaces should measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
- **Preventing Falls.** Make sure platforms and ramps have guardrails to prevent falls.
- **General Safety Check.** Make certain that there are no sharp points or edges in equipment, along with removing tripping hazards like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.
- **Periodic Checks.** Regularly check play equipment and surfacing to make sure both are in good condition. This is especially true for the area under the equipment as the shock-absorbing materials can be pushed around to make areas too thin.
- **Avoid Playing During the Heat of the Day.** Playground surfaces can get very hot and can hurt a child.
- **Clothing Safety.** Never allow a child to have strings on their clothing, like drawstrings.
- **Supervision.** Carefully supervise children on play equipment to make sure they are safe.

Take the time to ensure that the areas where your child will be playing is always safe.



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Louie Delaware, **The Home Safety Guru**[™], president and founder of US Safety Pros, LLC is a Certified Child & Home Safety Professional in all aspects of home safety, from childproofing to home safety, radon testing & mitigation along with fire, carbon monoxide and barrier free construction. US Safety Pros has helped safeguard over 700 homes. For more information about Louie Delaware, go to his web site, www.HomeSafetyGuru.com.

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