

MAINTENANCE RECOMMENDATIONS





The Importance of Maintenance

PLAY GROUNDS



200,000 children ages 14 and younger are treated in the ER for playground-related injuries every year

From neighborhoods to churches to schools, playgrounds are a staple of various outdoor spaces. While it can be tempting to take for granted the condition and longevity of your playground, skimping on proper playground maintenance is often fraught with risk.

Every year in the US, over 200,000 children ages 14 and younger are treated for injuries sustained on a playground; among these, 45 percent entail serious injuries such as fractures, dislocations, and concussions. When accidents happen, parents often look for someone to hold accountable for their child's injury. If found liable in civil court, you could be on the hook for hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages, even if you weren't present when the accident occurred. Fortunately, there are ways to mitigate risks associated with managing a playground. One of the easiest and most straightforward of these is to perform regular maintenance.



Playground owners are often liable for injuries, especially if maintenance is inconsistent

Playground maintenance not only keeps your outdoor space a safe and attractive environment for kids to play in, it also protects the investment that is your playground. Don't make the mistake of assuming your playground is simply fine as is; like a car or a home, keeping a playground safe and functional doesn't happen by itself. This guide is intended to simplify the process of playground self-maintenance, as well as offer guidance in maintaining specific parts of your playground so that the whole space remains an inviting place for all.

What To Look For

during regular maintenance



Equipment Maintenance

The first priority for routine equipment maintenance should be to ensure that there's no broken or missing equipment anywhere on your playground. If and when you find missing or broken equipment, the first thing you should do is to reference the warranty information on the equipment in question, then call the manufacturer for further instructions. If your equipment requires replacement, consider roping off the affected area until the replacement equipment arrives. If possible, replace the malfunctioning equipment with a placeholder item.



✓ Check Hardware



Ensure any anchors, barriers, and panels are properly secured. Any loose screws, bolts, or clamps should be tightened using tools like wrenches and sockets to ensure they won't be an issue in the future. If you encounter any missing screws or bolts, reference your manufacturer guide to find out what specific parts are missing, then, if possible, purchase replacements at your local hardware store.

✓ Look for Cracked/Worn Plastic



Cracked or broken plastic can also be a hazard on playgrounds. As a general rule, if a piece of equipment has plastic that's cracked or worn enough to potentially hurt someone, it's probably time to replace the equipment in question. That said, epoxy can be used to repair small abrasions on plastic-based equipment.

✓ Inspect Moving Parts



For equipment with moving parts such as swing sets or merry-go-rounds, your best bet against malfunction is to ambiently monitor the physical state of hinges, bearings, etc; once you start to notice excessive rust buildup and/or looseness, it's likely time to replace the problematic parts.

✓ Remove Rust and Corrosion



The last area of focus should be rusted, worn, and/or corroded metals. When you encounter rust, try applying some WD-40 to the affected area, then use a wire brush to scrub off any discolored metal. Then, if necessary, apply an additional coat of paint to the structure to finish the job.

Surfacing Maintenance

Regular surfacing maintenance is just as essential as equipment maintenance. Each year, the majority of playground-related injuries stem from falls sustained on inadequate surfacing. If using loose-fill surfacing, keep an eye on high-traffic areas such as those below or near swing sets or slides. For unitary surfacing, ensure there are no significant cracks or unevenness, as even small cracks could develop into larger, more significant ones. For more best practices, refer to the information below.

✓ Poured Rubber



Issues with pour-in-place or other types of rubber surfacing can come in a few different forms, the first and most obvious of which are cracks. Some small surfacing cracks are to be expected on playgrounds that have seen prolonged use; however, it's a good idea to make note of cracks over a foot in length, as these can easily spread and damage the rest of the surfacing. When large enough cracks present themselves, your best option could be to replace some or all of the surfacing.

✓ Wood & Rubber Mulch



When it comes to maintaining loose-fill surfacing, there are two major things to remember: rake and replenish. While both rubber and wooden mulch are great options for loose-fill surfacing, one of their disadvantages is that the chips often get kicked away from frequently used areas. Consequently, it's important to ensure that every area on your playground is evenly surfaced by raking the material such that it's evenly distributed throughout the playground.



In addition to surfacing, it's important to pay attention to the general state of the rest of your playground. Things like vandalized or broken equipment, insect infestations, and tripping hazards such as exposed tree roots should all be dealt with expeditiously to prevent injury.

HIGH FREQUENCY MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

- ✓ Vandalism/Graffiti
- ✓ Loose or Missing Hardware
- ✓ Chains (Kinked, Twisted, Broken)
- ✓ Guardrails Not Secure
- ✓ Seats (Cut, Cracked, Missing)
- ✓ Wood (Rotted, Cracked, Missing)
- ✓ Foreign Objects
- ✓ Debris on Steps, Platforms
- ✓ Footers Exposed
- ✓ Standing Water
- ✓ Playground Signage
- ✓ Adequate Surfacing Material



Final Tips

for playground maintenance

As with most things, proper playground maintenance most often boils down to consistency. The frequency with which you should perform playground maintenance depends on how often it's used, and, generally speaking, the more often kids play on your playground, the more often you should check for equipment and surfacing problems. At Playgrounds.com, we can help you compose an ideal playground maintenance schedule. By following it, you can rest easy knowing that your playground(s) are well kept and safe for kids to play on.

1. Be Proactive

The key to keeping a playground safe for play is to find potential issues before they become a hazard. By frequently checking for wear and tear, you can repair before there is a safety issue. Regular maintenance requires proactive measures to prioritize safety and protect your investment.

2. Be Consistent

By maintaining a consistent schedule for inspections and repairs, you can lessen the cost and headaches of common playground issues. Keep the maintenance team on a regular schedule. Include weekly checkups, monthly repairs and cleanups and don't forget to schedule inspections. Consistency will keep everyone safe and prolong the lifetime of the equipment.

3. Keep Records

Performing the maintenance alone will not reduce your risk of liability issues; you must keep records. Keep a binder to fill with maintenance checklists, inspection records and product warranties to make playground safety a little easier. Accurate records can protect you and keep your crew on the same page.



More Playground Maintenance Tips Available At



PLAYGROUNDS.COM



PLAY GROUNDS

1-844-384-4794 - TOLL FREE
1-317-280-3476 - LOCAL
www.playgrounds.com