



Falls Prevention

# Maryland RISK WATCH® CMT Update - April 2007



Playground Safety week is April 23 – 27, 2007

TO: Maryland RISK WATCH® Champions

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Month/ Dates	Activity/ Theme/ Module	Comments & Resources
April 23-27, 2007 And All year long	Playground Safety	National Playground Safety Week is April 23 - 27, 2007
	<b>SAFE: Safety on Playgrounds</b>	Supervision is present, but strings and ropes aren't. All children play on <b>A</b> ge-appropriate equipment. <b>F</b> alls to surface are cushioned. <b>E</b> quipment is safe.

### Websites with information on Playground Safety include:

Slyde – The Playground Hound – [www.playgroundhound.com](http://www.playgroundhound.com)

National Safe Kids – [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

National Program for Playground Safety–S.A.F.E. [www.uni.edu/playground/](http://www.uni.edu/playground/)

US Consumer Product Safety Commission - [www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/325.pdf](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/325.pdf)

### **Playground Safety:**

As educators it is our duty to our children that we make them aware of the dangers inherent in using playground equipment incorrectly. We must educate them on the potential dangers also associated with their surroundings. Informed children are able to make smart decisions about their environment and their lives. A visit to the playground should never result in a visit to the emergency room. Our goal is to educate our children and their family in the proper use of the playground and make it a happy experience not a frightful one.



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The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons summary of the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's 1999 NEISS data and estimates revealed that:

- ❗ More than 509,650 injuries related to playground equipment occurred among persons younger than age 20.
- ❗ Costing at least \$9.8 billion dollars each year (medical, legal and liability, pain and suffering, and work loss expenses)

*Here is a series of facts to help you with playground safety from the Playground Hound.*

[www.playgroundhound.com](http://www.playgroundhound.com)

### Playground Equipment Hazards: Entanglements

According to the CPSC - US Consumer Product Safety Commission, "playground accidents and incidents and the circumstances surrounding them illustrate the child's lack of awareness of the inherent dangers" related to entanglements and other equipment hazards.

**Causes of Death:** 56% of reported fatalities, 82 deaths were due to hanging unintentional strangulation due to ENTANGLEMENT in foreign objects, items that were not designed to be part of the playground equipment such as ropes, clothing drawstrings, bike helmets and home made rope swings.

**Entanglement:** Any condition where a child's body, body part or garments have become caught or stuck, leading to injury or even to death by strangulation.

**Hazard Pattern:** Most entanglements involved items tied to the equipment, tied around the child's neck, or both.

**Equipment Involved:** Most reported incidents center around playground slides, second to these are swing sets, climbing equipment and home made rope swings.

### Playground Equipment Hazards: Falls

Falls are the most common playground related accident and are sometimes fatal.

**Cause of Death:** 21% of reported fatalities, 31 deaths due to falls. About three-quarters of all fall-related fatalities were due to head impact.

**Other fall injuries:** According to the US Commission for Public Playground Safety around 79% of all reported injuries that occurred on public equipment involved falls. Most, (68%) were due to falls to the surface.

**Hazard Pattern:** Virtually all fall-related injuries on public equipment occurred from distances of less than 10 feet. Most were due to the child losing his or her grip.

**Equipment Involved:** Climbers, swings, and slides were most often cited as the equipment involved.

### Playground Equipment Hazards: Protrusions

The most common Protrusion injuries are minor scrapes or cuts, but protrusions do have the potential of becoming entanglements, which are known to become life threatening.

**Examples of Protrusions:** Bolt ends that extend two threads beyond the face of the nut, hardware configurations that form a hook or leave a gap or space between components, open "S" hooks, Rungs or handholds that protrude outward from a support structure may be capable of penetrating the eye sockets, sharp points, corners, edges can cut or puncture a child's skin.

**It should also be taught that if a child encounters this they need to show an adult so that corrective action to the protruding object is fixed.**

**Equipment Involved:** Projections are most often found on suspended members or swing assemblies and slides. They can also be found on climbers, rung ladders, hardware that is used to secure components together.

When trying to motivate children to play in a positive safe approach don't frighten them into thinking playing on the playground is unsafe. Children are very smart.

<http://www.miemss.org/EMSCwww/PPPed.html>  
<http://www.miemss.org/EMSCwww/RISKWATCH2.htm>



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**Public Playground Safety Checklist:** Here are 10 important tips for you to help parents and community groups as reference to ensure playground safety. These tips are from the – CPSC – US Consumer Product Safety Commission - [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

1. Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber like materials.
2. Check that protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
3. Make sure play structures more than 30 inches height are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
4. Check for dangerous hardware, like open “S” hooks or protruding bolt ends.
5. Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
6. Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
7. Look out for tripping hazards, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.
8. Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
9. Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.
10. Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure they're safe.