

# Guide to Proper Playground Maintenance

Source: [www.aaastateofplay.com](http://www.aaastateofplay.com)

Recess should be safe as well as fun!

Playgrounds are great fun for kids, so it's important to create a safe environment for play. An important part of ensuring playground safety is playground maintenance. Proper playground maintenance helps minimize the risk of preventable injuries. Learn how to keep your playground safe with thorough maintenance. Proper playground care involves regular inspections and updates of playground equipment and grounds. Developing a customized playground care and maintenance plan will help your playground provide the best possible play experience.

## Environmental Hazards - Caring for Surrounding Grounds

Maintaining a clean playground environment is vital to the health and safety of playing children. Playground grounds and equipment should be inspected daily for health and safety hazards. Carefully check for trash, broken glass, and other hazardous items and debris. Other problems to check for include vandalism or other signs of inappropriate use of the playground area. This inspection should encompass playground equipment and a reasonably large surrounding area, including any facilities children may use while playing. If your playground has a sandbox or loose surfacing like mulch, it's particularly important that you carry out a close inspection for hidden dangers. While looking for debris, keep an eye out for natural hazards as well. Just like trash, new natural dangers can appear overnight. Look for anything that could cause harm to children like exposed tree roots, loose rocks, and sharp branches. Proper drainage is another key component of a safe and clean playground. Standing water and improperly drained surfaces are a cause for concern as they can cause illness and injury. When inspecting the grounds, don't forget to inspect surfacing for potential damage. Confirm that children have soft landing areas and no tripping hazards. Regular surfacing care is important because, depending on your playground's type of surfacing, portions may become loose or scattered over time.

## Equipment Maintenance

Ensure that all equipment is up to basic safety standards. All equipment present on a playground should minimize the possibility of children harming themselves while playing. Evaluate any existing equipment to ensure that it doesn't pose a risk of children getting trapped or harmed, and stay current on new playground safety requirements. It's also important that you periodically conduct thorough inspections of playground equipment for damage and potentially hazardous situations. Learn to identify potentially dangerous equipment issues like sharp edges or improperly secured moving parts that could hurt or entangle children. Playground equipment should also be assessed for general wear and tear. Long-term exposure to the elements can cause damage to the equipment, and all equipment deteriorates over time. Follow the specific inspection protocol for your playground's equipment. You should evaluate equipment and make maintenance decisions based on the type of structure and materials used. For example, wooden equipment should be inspected for possible rot and splinters, while metal equipment should be checked for rust. Plastic equipment needs to be checked for any possible cracks and breakage. Some types of equipment will have components that require particular attention due to possible risks. This includes swing chains and seats, anything with moving parts, and equipment with steps.

If you come across a problem, assess the damage or problem and consult with a maintenance professional when necessary. It is important that you repair or remove any potentially hazardous playground equipment. While some problems are easily repaired, significant problems may require the purchase of replacement equipment.

Please reach out to Rich Cieler, LARMA Sr. Loss Control Representative, should you have any questions or need further guidance on establishing a formal playground safety checklist and program. Also included with this newsletter is a Playground Daily Safety Checklist that you can download and print for ready use.