

NATIONAL PLAYGROUND SAFETY WEEK 2019

For Release

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Annually, more than 200,000 children, visit emergency rooms due to playground-related injuries. Of those injuries, the vast majority (79%) are fall-related and account for 90% of the most severe playground injuries states BrainLine, a national multimedia project offering information and resources about preventing, treating, and living with TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). TBI is one of numerous severe injuries, i.e. fractures, internal injuries, concussions, dislocations and amputations that take place on playgrounds. Although 76% of all injuries occur on public playgrounds, 23% of injuries occur on home playground equipment. Monkey bars and climbing equipment, responsible for 40% of playground injuries, are considered so dangerous that experts recommend removing the equipment from playground areas.

Children not only experience severe injuries but also die playing on playgrounds. Each year, approximately 8 children die from playground equipment. Falls and head injuries account for the majority of playground-related injuries and fatalities, but the primary cause (58%) is strangulation. Strangulation occurs when a child's clothing or drawstrings are caught on the equipment. Although playground-related injuries are preventable, they still occur due to the lack of or improper supervision -- a major contributor (45%) of playground-related injuries according to Safe Kids Worldwide.

National Playground Safety Week begins April 22nd – April 26th; an event sponsored by the National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS). This annual event is a reminder to parents, grandparents, caregivers, teachers, camp counselors, and others to focus on children's outdoor play environments due to children being vulnerable to playground-related injuries and fatalities. To keep your child safe on the playground start by implementing the S.A.F.E Factors and Adult & Kid Safety Checklists to properly maintain a safe playground atmosphere:

S.A.F.E.

- Provide proper **supervision** of children on playgrounds.
- Design **age-appropriate** playgrounds.
- Provide proper **fall surfacing** under and around playgrounds.
- Properly maintain playground **equipment**.

Adult Safety Checklist:

- Adult presence is needed to watch for potential hazards.
- Remove ropes and strings on clothing, they can cause accidental strangulation if caught on equipment.
- Age-appropriate equipment with separate areas and different equipment.

- 3 categories for children:
 - Toddlers (6 months – 2 years old)
 - Preschool (2 years – 5 years old)
 - School age (5 years – 12 years old)
- Acceptable play surfaces, i.e. hardwood fiber/mulch, pea gravel, sand and synthetic materials, i.e. poured-in-place, rubber mats or tiles.
- Perform an equipment check:
 - Is it in good working order?
 - Safe and anchored safely in the ground?
 - No jagged edges or sharp points?
 - No hot surfaces? Surface areas on metal equipment from sunlight can cause burn injuries.
 - S-hooks are entirely closed, bolts are not protruding, there are no exposed footings, etc.?
 - Openings between guardrails and ladder rungs are at least 3.5 inches (to prevent kids getting their heads in) and more than 9 inches (to get out)
 - Equipment installed at least 6 feet from fences, walls and trees?

Kid Safety Checklist:

- Are adults at the playground?
- Can adults see children at all times even in crawl spaces?
- Is the equipment in good condition?
- Is the playground environment clean?
- Is the equipment surface smooth?

Acting Chief Tim Keen, of the Prince William County Fire and Rescue System, urges the public to get involved at home, school and your neighborhood to help reduce unintentional injuries among children.

For more information, visit Playground Professionals playgroundprofessionals.com/, Safe Kids Worldwide safekids.org/playgroundsafety, National Program for Playground Safety <http://playgroundsafety.org/>, Consumer Product Safety Commission <https://www.cpsc.gov/safety-education/safety-guides/playgrounds> and BrainLine brainline.org.