

A risk management approach addresses potential safety hazards and issues in the playground. The steps below follow the risk management process outlined in AS/NZS ISO 31000 Risk management—principles and guidelines.

STEP 1: Communication and Consultation

Successful assessment of risk depends on effective communication and consultation with stakeholders including:

- Identifying or assessing hazards or risks
- Making decisions on how to control risks
- Making decisions about procedures

STEP 2: Establishing the Context

Identify the external and internal risk management issues and establish a context within which risks are to be managed.

STEP 3: Risk Identification

The standard recommends a systematic approach and use of a structured process to help identify any risk. Initially it is useful to ask the following questions in relation to a potential hazard:

- **What** can happen, **where** and **when**?
Generate a comprehensive list of potential sources of risk
- **Why** and **how** can it happen? Consider possible causes and scenarios

STEP 4: Risk Analysis

This will help you decide the best approach for dealing with the risk/s. Evaluate the controls that are already in place, and consider their effectiveness. Examine each risk in terms of 'consequence' (what could happen) and 'likelihood' (the probability of something happening). This will help when making the decision about treating the risk/s.



STEP 5: Risk Evaluation

Use the information in Step 4 to make a decision about rating each of the risk/s. The matrix on the following page can assist with this process. The risk rating can determine the appropriate action. Different risks require different levels of action.

STEP 6: Risk Treatment

There are a range of options for treating risks including:

- Removing or avoiding the risk entirely where practicable.
- Reducing the likelihood of the risk by putting control measures in place, installing a barrier or relying on close supervision, and keeping children within reach.

STEP 7: Monitor and Review

Use the information in Step 4 to make a decision about rating each of the risk/s. The matrix on the following page can assist with this process. The risk rating can determine the appropriate action. Different risks require different levels of action.

An example of a risk level matrix from AS 4685.0:2017

| | | | | | | |
|------------|---|-------------|---|---|---|---|
| LIKELIHOOD | 5 | L | M | H | H | U |
| | 4 | L | M | M | H | H |
| | 3 | L | L | M | M | H |
| | 2 | L | L | L | M | M |
| | 1 | L | L | L | L | L |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | | CONSEQUENCE | | | | |

Likelihood of an injury is rated as:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Rare (highly unlikely event) | 1 |
| Unlikely (conceivable event) | 2 |
| Possible (could occur event) | 3 |
| Likely (almost certain event) | 4 |
| Almost certain (will occur event) | 5 |

RISK BENEFIT

Play providers can develop an approach to risk management that considers the benefits as well as risks of challenging play experiences.

A degree of risk in playgrounds is beneficial. Providing children with the opportunity to enjoy challenging, adventurous play, encountering hazards and taking risks will assist in their development and give them capacity to manage risks for themselves.

The learning process is valuable.

Risk benefit assessment informs the appropriate action and implementation and may include taking into account the following:

- Local factors such as historic use and environmental conditions
- Purpose and likely users
- Precedents
- Role of supervisors (if appropriate)
- Specialised knowledge
- Management and monitoring

The potential consequences of an injury is rated as:

| | |
|---|---|
| Little or no injury | 1 |
| Minor injury requiring first aid | 2 |
| Moderate injury causing absence from school | 3 |
| Serious injury with long term consequences | 4 |
| Death or major disability | 5 |

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Need more help? Kidsafe SA provides a playground inspection service. Contact us for a quote to organise an inspector to visit your playspace and provide specific advice.