

Playground maintenance is an important issue for the operation of all playspaces. When planning a playground, regardless of its size or location, it is essential to establish a playground safety management system. This system should include the following details:

- Budget allocation
- Playground inventory
- Maintenance routine
- Inspections
- Inspection types and frequency
- Inspection checklists
- Risk assessment and management
- Documentation and certification
- Records of incidents and injury

Budget Allocation

It is recommended that a minimum 10% of the entire playground budget is allocated on an annual basis to playground maintenance. This allocation allows for older items deemed no longer suitable or unsafe to be replaced within an appropriate timeframe rather than waiting for funds to become available. Resources also need to be allocated to enable regular playground inspections to occur either internally by trained staff or engaging the services of an independent playground inspection service. Contact Kidsafe SA for information on inspection services.

Playground Inventory

An inventory enables the playground provider to account for all items within the playspace (including equipment and components, shade, litter bins, water fountains etc.) as part of asset management. As items are purchased or replaced the inventory should be updated allowing accurate expenditure to be attached to the playground. This then facilitates effective maintenance of the playground in accordance with the budget allocation. The playground inventory provides a means to appropriately manage the playground as an asset.



Maintenance Routine

A timeframe that outlines when individual components of a playground must be checked is necessary to ensure all aspects of the playground are maintained on a routine basis i.e. weekly, monthly, quarterly and annually. This will be determined based on individual playgrounds i.e. susceptibility to vandalism, components and surfacing materials, climate and the location of the playground and usage.

When purchasing new equipment the manufacturer is required to provide a documented recommended maintenance schedule. Playground owners must avoid making modifications to playground equipment as it may void the manufacturer's warranty. Playground owners should contact the manufacturer for spare parts and/or necessary modifications. An example maintenance schedule is provided on page 3 of this information sheet.



Inspection

An accurate assessment of the entire playspace should be completed following installation of the playground and then on a regular basis. A checklist should be used to guide the inspector through every component of the playground. This should also act as the first step in the procedure to rectifying any issues that have been identified during the inspection. Once an issue has been highlighted it must be recorded and a procedure followed to ensure that the issue is addressed i.e. replacement part ordered. An example of procedure list may include:

- Hazards identified
- Risk ratings
- Control or repair methods
- Those responsible to implement controls/repairs
- Dates for controls/repairs to be completed
- Sign off when controls/repairs implemented

Inspection Types and Frequency

AS 4685 Playground equipment and surfacing Part 0:2017 Development, installation, inspection, maintenance and operation requires routine maintenance checks to be conducted on a regular basis. These include the inspection of all timber, wear and tear on chains, condition of all play items (cracks, corrosion, graffiti, etc), and insect infestation. A guide to inspection type and frequency is provided below.

Routine Visual (daily/weekly):

- Identify obvious hazards resulting from vandalism, wear and tear, or weather conditions. (e.g. Damaged parts, broken glass, syringes, loss of playground surfacing).

Operational (1 to 3 monthly):

- Check the operation and stability of equipment, wear of components such as ball bearings, moving joints and attachments.

Comprehensive (Annually):

- To be conducted by a competent person.
- Check for compliance with Australian Standards for playground safety.
- Check the overall stability of the equipment, footings, surfacing, structural integrity, corrosion/rotting. Check for safety of any changes made due to repairs/replaced components.

Comprehensive Post Installation:

- To be conducted by a competent person.
- Verify compliance with Australian Standards for playground safety.
- Check the installation, manufacturing faults, footings, structural integrity and surfacing.
- Drop testing unitary playground surfacing.

Inspection Checklist

Playground safety inspections, using formal checklists, provide workers/inspectors with a valuable tool in identifying playground hazards.

Checklists can be used as a guide to assess condition of equipment and ensure hazards are more easily identified. A checklist may be modified to suit particular playspaces.



Risk Assessment and Management

Each hazard identified as part of the inspection regime needs to be considered in terms of the hazard presented and then prioritised for attention.

When a playspace hazard is identified there is a need to assess its risk of causing injury or damage. Risk assessment is simply a further analysis of the hazard by breaking it down into more specific component parts to evaluate the nature of the hazard. Assessing the risk associated with the hazard by specifically defining its nature will assist in determining:

- Probability or likelihood of causing injury or damage
- Consequence/s or severity of outcome

Refer to information sheet A Risk Management Approach for help with prioritising identified risks.

The method of risk control selected and implemented will need to be monitored and reviewed periodically to ensure that its effectiveness for control is maintained. Playground providers will ensure controls are suitable and make plans for improvements to the control method, if necessary.

Records of Incidents and Injuries

To assist in the prevention of playground injuries, it is important to learn from the events of previous incidents/injuries including near misses. This will allow corrective actions to be taken.

An analysis of the incidents (including near misses) and injuries that have occurred in the playground can be undertaken to identify injury trends and causes of injury. The information gained can be used to inform risk assessments and risk control development aimed at minimising those causes.

Inspection Types and Frequency

Quality documentation is an important part of the Playground Safety Management System. This is a necessity due to several reasons. Most importantly, it allows errors to be isolated and successes to be replicated. Documentation also helps you to guard against the risk of potential litigation.

Documentation to be archived may include:

- Policies and procedures
- Supervision plans
- Reports eg. accident/injury (see below) Inventory/Equipment register (refer to page 5 of this information sheet)
- Inspection checklists
- Work orders
- Maintenance actions
- Certification records eg. equipment, surfacing
- Manufacturer's warranty details
Manufacturer's installation, inspection and maintenance instructions
- Operating Instructions (if applicable)



CONTACT KIDSAFE SA

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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.

Daily/Weekly

Remove loose objects from playspace e.g. small chairs, buckets, ropes, hoses etc	Remove litter, glass, sharps, any unhygienic matter; clean surfacing as required	Remove nesting insects and spiders;	Remove poisonous plants/ weeds e.g. fungi;	Remove graffiti	Rake and redistribute loose fill playground surfacing	Close off broken/ vandalised equipment items until replacement parts available and fitted
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Monthly/Quarterly

Ensure playground surfacing is free of damage and trip hazards	Ensure foundations and structures are stable; check smooth operation of moving parts; grease/ oil as required	Monitor wear and tear on chains, cabling, connectors; replace as required	Monitor condition of timber items e.g. splitting, splintering; treat as required to ensure smooth surfaces	Remove nesting insects and spiders	Clean equipment to remove stains, mould, dirt; make hygienic	Clear all access paths of vegetation
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Annually

Ensure playground surfacing is free of surface wear, sub grade deterioration, damage, trip hazards	Treat surface rust in metal components of equipment; clean surface, rasp back, treat with rust inhibitor, repaint as required	Touch up/ refinish painted surfaces as required (incl. highlighting for visual awareness at step edges)	Replace failed plantings as required	Mulch all garden beds	Replace sand in sandpit if required	Replenish loose fill surfacing to the required depth in all impact areas of equipment.
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Every 3 years: Playground Surface Drop Test

Drop Testing

Playground surfacing of unitary materials such as rubber and synthetic grass, is required to be drop tested post installation and then every three years to ensure the impact attenuating surface is performing to the requirements of AS 4422.



Playground Equipment and Surfacing Sample Inventory Checklist

Location	
Surrounding Sites and Use(s)	
Cleaning/Mowing Schedule	
Annual Maintenance Budget	
Warranties and expected lifespan of equipment and surfacing	

Equipment Inventory

Item of Equipment E.g. Platform #1; Platform #2; Barrier 1; etc.	Manufacturer/Supplier Identification of manufacturer shown?	Installation Date and Installer Contractor or Day Labourer	Maintenance Schedule received from manufacturer/supplier? File Appropriately
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

Surfacing Inventory

Type of Surfacing E.g. loose fill mulch, sand, wet pour rubber, synthetic grass	Manufacturer/Supplier	Installation Date and Installer	Maintenance Schedule received from manufacturer/Supplier
1.			
2.			
3.			