

THE DIRTY DOZEN

From the National Playground Safety Institute, of the National Recreation & Park Association

Are unsafe conditions hiding at your child's playground?

The National Playground Safety Institute has identified the twelve leading causes of injury on playgrounds in a pamphlet entitled "The Dirty Dozen Checklist." The following is a brief explanation of these twelve hazards:

1. **Protective Surfacing** — Does the playground have at least 12 inches (30 cm) of wood fiber, sand or other safety surfacing in place? The depth of surfacing required depends on the height of the equipment.
2. **Proper Fall Zones** — Protective surfacing needs to extend a minimum of 6 feet (183 cm) from stationary equipment, and in the case of swings, twice the crossbar height.
3. **Protrusions & Entanglements** — Are there ropes that can be formed into a noose? Are there exposed nuts and bolts that can scratch or catch clothing?
4. **Head Entrapments** — Most open spaces, between 3 1/2 inches (9 cm) and 9 inches (23 cm) mean trouble, especially at the top of a slide, between platforms, or between decks.
5. **Equipment Spacing** — This can range anywhere from 6 feet (183 cm), 9 feet (275 cm) or 12 feet (366 cm). Swings and other moving equipment should be located in an area away from other structures.
6. **Trip Hazards** — Look for protruding tree roots, exposed concrete, and abrupt changes in surface elevation. Keep the safety surface free of debris and hazards so children can run freely on the playground.
7. **Supervision** — Is the equipment designed so you can "see" through it...or are there too many hiding spots for supervisors to adequately perform their job?
8. **Age Appropriate Activities** — Developmental needs vary greatly from ages 2 through 12. Is the equipment challenging and fun, yet still safe for the intended user?
9. **Maintenance** — A playground must have a program of systematic, preventative maintenance to remain in a safe condition.
10. **Pinch, Crush and/or Sharp Hazards** — Are there sharp edges or pinch points located where a child's skin can be cut or a finger get pinched?
11. **Platforms with No Guardrails** — Are there proper railings, walls, or protective devices in place to prevent inadvertent falls from platforms and ramps?
12. **Equipment NOT Recommended** — Trapeze bars, ropes that can be cut, heavy animal figures or glider type swings are not recommended for public playgrounds.

Your KOMPAN Playground Consultant is highly trained and educated in playground equipment safety, playground layout, and safety surface selection and can work with you to be sure your child's playground meets all safety guidelines.

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