

## In THIS ISSUe

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- 2001 National Playground Safety Week announced! See page 2 for details.
- They're here! Find out how to get your own age-appropriate signage on page 2.
- *Look What's Happening!* See page 3 to learn how one "pesky mom" took advocating playground safety to the next level.
- ADA Guidelines released. More on page 2.

## Mark your calendar!

Upcoming events related to playground safety you won't want to miss.

### February 2001

11 – 13  
 American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance (AAHPERD)  
 Central District, Des Moines, IA;  
 515-221-2383

### March

19 – 20  
 National Child Care Association, Las Vegas, NV; 800-543-7161

24 – 27  
 National School Board Association (NSBA), San Diego, CA; 703-838-6722

29 – 31  
 Southern Early Childhood Association, Little Rock, AK; 800-305-7322

### March CONTINUED

27 – 31  
 AAHPERD, Cincinnati, OH

### April

7 – 10  
 National Elementary School Principals, San Diego, CA

23  
 Playground Safety Summit

23 - 27  
 NPPS Playground Safety Week; 0800-554-PLAY

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ASHES, ASHES, WE ALL FALL DOWN but are we falling .. on SAFE surfaces?

Just as every child falls down at some point in their active childhood, every playground is bound to have incidents and injuries related to falls. A major factor in whether those falls will cause serious injuries or not is the characteristics of the surfacing materials used. The new NPPS *Guide to Surfacing* shows how to evaluate the safety characteristics of your surface materials.

Selecting, installing and maintaining appropriate playground surfaces may be one of the most critical factors in reducing playground injuries. Studies indicate that 70% of all playground injuries and approximately 9 out of 10 serious injuries are related to falls to surfaces. In addition, research conducted and published by NPPS shows that in 80% of the cases where injuries were attributed to falls, the surfacing material was inappropriate. Thus, an important aspect of reducing playground injuries is to provide the appropriate cushioned surfaces under and around equipment.

Unfortunately, there are no perfect playground surfaces. For instance, pea gravel may not be appropriate for a childcare center since young children tend to put things in their mouths. Also, wood chips do not work well in arid sites.

To help playground planners decide what surfaces may be appropriate for their playgrounds, NPPS has developed a guide for playground surfacing called *Selecting Playground Surface Materials*. The guide includes newly released information concerning commonly-used compressed loose fill materials such as sand,



Advantages of each include, but aren't limited to: **Inorganic loose material** (sand & gravel) - nonflammable, does not decompose; **Unitary synthetic material** - low maintenance, consistent shock absorbency; **Organic loose material** - good drainage, low cost; **Inorganic loose material** (shredded tires) - doesn't deteriorate, less likely to compact

woodchips, shredded rubber and engineered wood fiber. This information extends CPSC guidelines as it deals with what occurs with **compressed** rather than **uncompressed** materials.

Since most playgrounds are heavily used, it seemed logical to test materials in their **compressed** state. It should be noted that these findings did show that 12 inches of compressed sand, woodchips, shredded rubber and engineered wood fiber can provide shock absorbency for equipment up to 8 feet in height (specific depth information can be found in the guide). *NPPS recommends the height of any playground equipment not exceed 8 feet for school-aged and 5 feet for preschool-aged children.*

The surfacing guide leads the consumer through four major decision areas: fall protection, accessibility, maintenance and cost. In addition, the guide offers a surfacing matrix, providing an easy-to-understand comparison of loose fill material.

View the guide on the NPPS web at [www.uni.edu/playground](http://www.uni.edu/playground) or contact NPPS at 800-554-PLAY for a hard copy. NPPS hopes the guide will help consumers in choosing appropriate surfaces to help make playgrounds SAFE for all children.

## Welcome Aboard!

NPPS would like to welcome **Heather Bauer** as our new Program Assistant.

Heather graduated with a B.A. from the University of Northern Iowa and is currently working on her M.A. in Leisure, Youth and Human Service. She is an NPPS Safety School graduate and has passed the NPPS SAFE playground certification exam.

Heather worked previously as a Graduate Assistant at NPPS. In her current position, Heather will provide technical assistance to phone calls and e-mail inquiries, coordinate the production of the newsletter and assist in presenting information to the public at conferences and workshops.

We welcome Heather as a valuable member to the NPPS staff.

## Recent articles by NPPS staff

Thompson, D., Hudson, S., Mack, M. (Spring 2000) "Installing SAFE Playgrounds." *The Playbook* (Publication of National Playground Contractors Association), pp. 10 – 12.

Mack, M., Sacks, J., Thompson, D. (June 2000) "Testing the Impact Attenuation of Loose-Fill Playground Surfaces." *Injury Prevention* 6. (2), pp. 141 – 144.

Thompson, D., Hudson, S., Mack, M. (Spring 2000) "Why is Supervision so Important at Recess?" *Elementary School Recess*, Rhonda Clements, ed. Boston: American Press. pp. 152 – 155.

## QUICK REFERENCE

### Adequate fall protection involves...

Selection of suitable materials  
 Height of equipment  
 Depth of loose fill  
 Material in proper use zone

### Accessibility includes...

Pathway to/from equipment  
 Method of getting onto and off equipment

### Maintenance depends on...

Climate  
 Materials selected  
 Usage

### Costs include...

Initial Purchase  
 Installation  
 Maintenance

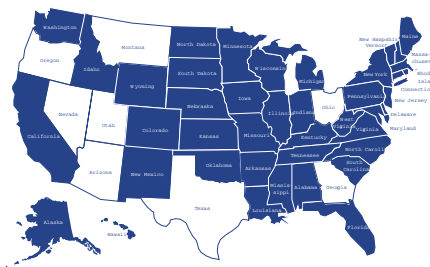
## 2001 Playground Safety Week BIGGER & BETTER Than Ever!

The number of states officially proclaiming National Playground Safety Week went from 2 in 1997 to 25 in 1998 to 33 in 1999 and increased to 42 in 2000. Special thanks to all those who helped break each of these records. With your help we can do it again in 2001!

NPPS has announced that Playground Safety Week will be April 23 – 27, 2001. Our goal is to get support from all 50 states. Playground Safety Week is a time for everyone to focus on playground safety and to advocate safety and injury prevention on our nation's playgrounds.

This is your chance to have a voice in making America's playgrounds SAFE. We invite you to help us persuade the governor in your state to declare the week of April 23 – 27, 2001 as Playground Safety Week. Parents, caretakers and students can send letters or drawings to their governors to help them become aware of the event.

We strongly encourage every elementary



The 42 states darkened in the map above proclaimed April 24 – 28, 2000, Playground Safety Week. Let's make it 50 in 2001!

school to become a special advocate for creating SAFE play environments for our children. If your school is interested in helping us promote playground safety awareness, please contact us at 800-554-PLAY. We are looking for schools to volunteer to be representatives for their state. We will work with teachers and students to help create SAFE playgrounds. We look forward to hearing from you by March 1, 2001.

### ADA GUIDELINES RELEASED

The United States Access Board has released the long anticipated guidelines concerning accessibility for playgrounds. The guidelines released on October 18, 2000, are a further interpretation of how the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to newly constructed or altered public playgrounds.

The new guidelines as issued by the Board are not mandatory on the public. Instead, they set the minimum baseline for enforceable ADA standards maintained by the Department of Justice.

 The ADA guidelines are available on the Access Board's web site at [www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov).

## LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING!

### Great strides in Rochester, NY

**DARLA BUGNER**, LPN, CPSI and Mom, writes to thank "all the helpful people at NPPS" for help and information on playground safety, which have allowed her, as a parent and advocate of playground safety, to spread the word in Rochester, NY. She says her interest in playground safety turned into a passion for safer playgrounds the minute she made her first call to NPPS not long after her daughter, 4 at the time, was injured on a school playground.

"The information I gained from you was the support I needed to pursue this issue with our school district, town and the Child Safety Committee of the Rochester Safety Council," Darla writes.

Since then, she's been using brochures to promote playground safety in the school, as well as the need for more education for children and playground monitors. As a result, the district has now included safer, new playgrounds and adequate, accessible surfacing in their capital project.

As a member of the town safety coalition, playground safety is promoted via brochures, local newspaper articles and television coverage. Through collaboration between local restaurants, they offered playground safety videos to the public. Also, the town safety coalition has set aside one evening per month for the promotion of safety issues.

The town also has two new playgrounds. One of the playgrounds was supported with the help of the Irondequoit Rotary Club, town members, KABOOM and Home Depot. Darla used NPPS resources to help contribute to the overall success of the project.

The Child Safety Committee embraced playground safety approximately 2 years



ago. In less than 10 months, they published a safety brochure, free to the public.

Darla writes, "You can see what strides have been made with the support of organizations like yours. I would encourage anyone interested in playground safety to use your information and materials to gain support. The promotion of playground safety and injury prevention on playgrounds from NPPS has positively influenced the community of Rochester, New York!"

**Thank you, Darla, for helping us spread the word about playground safety awareness. We're happy to hear your community is working together to keep kids SAFE!**

### "Pesky mom" pushes improvement

**SITA HELMS**, Mom, tells us of the long-overdue playground safety accomplishments in Laguna Beach. Sita says she ignored the stigma of being known as a "pesky mom" and headed to City Hall armed with letters from her neighborhood about an unsafe, dilapidated park. She presented the letter to City Council members and continued her efforts with months of visits, calls, petitions and requests to have reporters calling the City Council to improve the injury-prone playground.

All of her hard work has paid off, and many of the needed improvements were made to the neighborhood playground. The telephone pole steps with rotten centers were filled with concrete, the slide and swing were repaired, and the City Council of Laguna Beach has allotted \$55,000 to refurbish the park.

**Way to go, Sita! Can this mom help inspire you to help make a change in your neighborhood? Let's make our neighborhood parks SAFE!**

## PRODUCT-RELATED NEWS

### Playground Planning Video

The resources available through NPPS will be increasing soon. A Playground Planning video is being developed and is due out near the beginning of 2001.

Based on the *Planning A Play Area for Children* brochure, this video is scheduled to feature information about six major topics, including forming a planning committee, gathering information, developing a concept plan, fundraising, installing the equipment, and training the staff.

The video will cost \$29.95, plus shipping and handling. Please call 800-554-PLAY if you are interested in purchasing this video.

### New shipping and handling fees

As of October 1, 2000, NPPS has added a shipping and handling charge to its videos. This charge is necessary because of increased costs associated with the program. There will be no additional costs attached to written materials unless you would like them shipped other than standard mail.

## Age-Appropriate signs now available through NPPS

The Age-Appropriate playground signs featured in April on the *NBC Later Today* show are now available for purchase. NPPS and 3M Nexcare First Aid Products teamed together to create playground signs to designate which playground areas are appropriate for children ages 2 through 5 and which areas are appropriate for ages 5 through 12.

These signs were created to provide information that reminds adults to supervise children on the playground and to take children to play on equipment appropriate for their age group. The metal signs are treated to prevent graffiti.

You can view these signs at [www.uni.edu/playground/signs.html](http://www.uni.edu/playground/signs.html). One sign costs \$65 plus shipping and handling. There is a sliding scale for those purchasing more than 20 signs. Consider teaming up with other park departments and schools to purchase these signs.



Signage available through the National Program for Playground Safety Office. Call 800-554-PLAY for details.

SIGN PRICES	
# of signs	Price per sign
1 – 19	\$65
20 – 39	\$60
40 – 59	\$55
60+	\$45

If you are interested in purchasing these signs, please contact NPPS at 800-554-PLAY.

## LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING!

We'd love to hear what's happening in your area to promote playground safety. Just complete this form, attach your news and mail to: NPPS, School of HPELS, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, 50614-0618 or [playground-safety@uni.edu](mailto:playground-safety@uni.edu). Watch for your submission in upcoming issues! Please notify NPPS of any address changes with this form as well.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Fax ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

My address has changed. Please update your records.