

# Safety Guidelines

Young children learn about the world by exploring and trying things out; minimizing their exposure to hazards will protect them from serious injuries.

The following is a list of some, but not all, potential indoor and outdoor hazards based on the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Public Playground Safety Handbook, the Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS); and corresponding ECERS and NYC DECE Additional Notes for Clarification:

- **Fall Zone/Protective Surfacing:** Falls are the most frequent cause of injuries on playgrounds- a “fall zone” is the area around and under gross motor equipment, indoors and outdoors, where approved protective surfacing, such as rubber surfaces or wood chips, is required to prevent injury from falls. Fall zones for climbing equipment should extend at least 6 feet, be clear of obstructions, and meet the ASTM F1292 soft surfacing requirements to provide enough cushioning and prevent serious injuries. The specific floor surfacing depth required under climbing equipment is based on the equipment height and the type of material, such as rubber, sand, or wood-chips. Equipment having a fall height of 18 inches or less is not required to have protective surfacing; however, no equipment should be placed on a hard surface, such as concrete, asphalt, tiles or stone.
- **Spacing between Gross Motor Structures:** adjacent structures with a play surface over 30” high should be spaced at least 9 feet apart to allow children to circulate around or fall from play structures without striking another structure, and to permit adults to have easy access to children using the equipment.
- **Fences/Latches:** Fences and gate latches must be at least 48 inches high and must completely enclose the play area to prevent children from leaving unsupervised. Fence bars should be less than 4 inches apart to prevent children from passing through.
- **Vehicular Traffic:** A discrete barrier, such as structural bollards, trees or posts, should prevent vehicles from accidentally entering outdoor spaces used by children. Neighborhood walks are considered a major safety hazard due to the danger of vehicular traffic.
- **Entanglement:** Children’s clothing, particularly drawstrings on the hoods of jackets or sweatshirts, can cause strangulation if caught in protruding bolts or swings open S-hooks.
- **Entrapment:** Children can get trapped and strangled in openings that are 3.5 to 9 inches wide.
- **Pinch, Crush, Shearing:** Children’s fingers or other body parts may be pinched, crushed, or sheared by moving pieces of equipment, such as suspension bridges, track rides, merry-go-rounds, or seesaws.
- **Protrusions:** Children’s skin could get punctured by sharp points, bolt ends, corners or edges.
- **Inadequate Guardrails:** Platforms higher than 20 and up to 30 inches above the ground require guardrails to prevent children from falling off. The top edge of guardrails should be 29 inches and the lower edge between 9 and 23 inches from the platform to prevent children from climbing over, under and through them.
- **Inadequate Protective Barriers:** Platforms higher than 30 inches above the ground require protective barriers to prevent children from falling off and the top surface of the barrier should be at least 29 inches above the platform

- **Unsafe/Uneven Walkways:** Children can fall, trip or slip due to steep stairs, tree roots, uneven tiles, and/or trash, sand, or water on the floor.
- **Exposure to Poisonous Products:** Items with a "Keep out of reach of children" warning.
- **Exposure to Electricity:** Unprotected electrical sockets/plugs (if not tamper resistant).
- **Examples of Gross Motor Equipment Considered "Too Difficult":**
  - Structures higher than 60 inches
  - Free standing arch or flexible climber
  - Geo domes
  - Trapeze bars
  - Log rolls
  - Trampolines
  - Track rides
  - Fulcrum seesaws
  - Chain or cable walks
  - Vertical sliding poles with no steps
  - Spiral slides with more than one 360 degree turn
  - Animal figure, multiple occupancy and rope swings