

Health and Safety Bulletin No. 19

Entrapment hazards in public playgrounds

Date: 23 July 2025

Background

Playgrounds encourage children to have fun experiences while learning and developing their skills. However, playground equipment with forced movements, such as spinning or sliding, can be a hazard and pose a risk to the safety of children.

One type of entrapment hazard can occur when a child's body part or clothing becomes trapped between moving parts of the playground equipment. The risk of injury from entrapment increases when the equipment involves forced movements.

An incident in August 2023 highlights the entrapment dangers. While using a wheelchair-accessible carousel, a four-year-old child's little toe was amputated when it was trapped in the gap between the spinning metallic platform and the stationary outer section of the carousel. Sadly, attempts to reattach the toe were unsuccessful.

WorkSafe, in conjunction with Kidsafe WA, wants to remind those accountable for operating playgrounds that they have a responsibility to help keep children safe from entrapment and other hazards.

Contributory factors

- The presence of openings and gaps in the design of playground equipment poses a risk of entrapment when undergoing forced movement.
- Failure to maintain, inspect, identify, assess and address potential entrapment hazards in playground equipment.
- Failure to display safety signage about the importance of proper parental supervision, appropriate footwear and potential entrapment risks.

Actions required

Playground operators, such as local government authorities, educational institutions, commercial enterprises, or community groups, must take proactive measures to eliminate, or if that is not reasonably practicable, minimise the risks from entrapment hazards, such as:

- modifying or repairing playground equipment to eliminate entrapment hazards in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations, a competent person's advice or design standards
- having a competent person regularly inspect and maintain all playground equipment in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations, a competent person's advice or design standards

- installing safety signs about the potential risks, need for parental supervision and recommendation to wear appropriate footwear where necessary
- raising awareness in the industry about hazards associated with playground equipment, specifically those involving forced movements.

Recommendations

Playground operators should have a safety management system in place for the playground. This includes establishing a risk assessment and reporting procedure, the carrying out of inspections and maintenance, and training staff on relevant matters such as identifying potential entrapment hazards.

Risk assessment

The risk assessment for a playground should identify the hazards and the associated risks. While some exposure to risk may be beneficial to children, others like entrapment risks, need to be eliminated or minimised.

Design

Entrapment hazards should be eliminated at the design stage. Where hazards have been identified, it may be possible to modify or repair existing equipment so long as the changes meet the manufacturer's recommendations, a competent person's advice or design standards.

Comprehensive post-installation inspection

A competent person must inspect the playground prior to it opening for public use. The inspection should identify whether the playground:

- meets the relevant requirements of the Australian Standard (AS) 4685 series and the impact-attenuating surfacing test in AS 4422
- has any areas that do not conform with the AS requirements.

Where areas of the playground do not conform to the AS requirements, a risk assessment or risk benefit assessment should be carried out, with the results reviewed by a competent person.

Signage

Signage at playgrounds should include information needed by children and their parents or carers, such as identifying information (name and location of playground), contact details of the playground operator, hazard warnings, instructions on how to use equipment, the need for supervision and the recommendation to wear appropriate footwear where necessary. Using positive messaging and pictograms can help all users understand the information being conveyed.

Routine inspections

A competent person must carry out regular inspections to identify hazards from wear and tear, environmental factors or interference from the public. When determining the frequency of routine inspections, consider the local conditions, frequency of use and the manufacturer's recommendations, a competent person's advice or design standards. These considerations will affect how often inspections are needed.

Operational inspections

Operational inspections of playground equipment should occur at least quarterly by a competent person. These inspections should check for a range of issues identified in AS 4685.0:2017, which includes the structural integrity, wearing of moving parts and clearances beneath carousels.

Comprehensive annual inspections

A competent person should carry out a comprehensive inspection of playground equipment at least once every 12 months to check the equipment's compliance with the manufacturer's recommendations and design standards.

Training and awareness

Workers should be trained to identify potential entrapment hazards. Additionally, raising awareness in the industry about hazards associated with playground equipment, specifically those involving forced movements, can be beneficial in reducing the safety risks.

Competent person

Inspections and maintenance are required to be carried out by a competent person who has acquired, through training, qualifications or experience, the knowledge and skills to perform the specified task.

Further information

Work Health and Safety Commission

- [Managing risks of plant in the workplace: Code of practice](#)

Kidsafe WA

- [Play safety](#)

WorkSafe ACT

- [Health and safety advice: Childrens play centres](#)

Standards Australia

- [AS 4685.0:2017 Playground equipment and surfacing – Part 0: Development, installation, inspection, maintenance and operation](#)
- [AS 4422:2016 Playground surfacing Specifications, requirements and test method](#)

Play Australia

- [Entrapment](#)