

## **PlaySafe and Live Well!**

Welcome to PlaySafe, LLC's informational column. Every month we will work hard to provide you with up-to-date information on topics related to parks, recreation, health, wellness, and physical education. Our hope is that by providing you with detailed information, you will go forward and positively change the world. If you have questions or comments, or if you would like to share your thoughts, please contact us through this web site. Thanks. Now PlaySafe and live well!

### **Do you have an Age Appropriate Playground?**

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Most child development centers and other early childhood facilities provide playground equipment for their attendees. PlaySafe, LLC conducts audits at many of these playgrounds, and we have found that it is common for the areas to be designed for children older than the intended users. When designing a playground for this type of learning environment, there are three age groups with vastly different needs to keep in mind. The *Public Playground Safety Handbook – 325*, written by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, covers all three groups and lists them as **Toddlers** (6 to 23 months), **Preschool** (2-5 years) and **School Age** (5-12 years). Each section of the Handbook describes the different requirements for each age group. ASTM International provides the *ASTM F1487 Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use*, which limits the age groups it covers to 2-5 and 5-12 years old (defined as Preschool and School Age groups in the CPSC document). The ASTM F1487 also provides definitive direction for each age group's playground designs.

ASTM International also provides the *ASTM F 2373 – Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specifications for Public Use Play Equipment for Children 6 Months through 23 Months* (Toddlers group in the CPSC document). This is where most mistakes occur. Up until recently, there was not a wealth of playground equipment that a facility for young children could purchase that met the 6-23 months child's needs and design requirements. Due to this shortage of correct user age (6-23 months) equipment, equipment for 2-5 year old children was purchased and installed at early childhood facilities throughout the country. Equipment designed for 2-5 year old children does not meet the safety performance specifications for the younger group and can cause injuries or even death.

There are many differences between the equipment for 6-23 month old children and 2-5 year old children and we strongly suggest that you purchase the ASTM F2373, ASTM F1487, and download the CPSC Handbook 325. The following are some examples of the differences:

**Head and Neck Entrapment** – The ASTM F2373 has a different size opening that is acceptable for equipment for 6 month to 23 month old children. It also calls for use of an infant torso probe which is a different size than the torso probe that the ASTM F1487 and CPSC 325 use for 2-12 year old children's equipment.

**Vertical Heights between Adjacent Platforms** – The ASTM F2373 section 7.2.1 calls for a height of 7 inches or less between adjacent platforms to have infill and preclude the infant torso probe entry. The ASTM F1487 section 7.5.6.5 and the CPSC 325 sections for 2-12 year old children equipment have a different height requirement (12 inches for 2-5 year olds and 18 inches for 5-12 year olds).

**Corners and Edges of Equipment** - The ASTM F2373 section 6.2.1.2 provides a defined acceptable corner and edge on rigid materials of a minimum radius of 0.025 inches unless the material thickness is less than 0.5 inches. Much of the equipment for 2-12 year old children does not meet this requirement and many child development centers have equipment designed for 2-12 year old children at their locations.

All playground equipment is not equal and young children need our help the most. If the playground at your site (for young children) has not been reviewed to the ASTM F2373 and the CPSC 325 Toddler Sections you may be creating an opportunity for a child to be hurt or worse and have to experience the lawsuit that will follow. Please take the time to identify the type of equipment you have and who is using it.

There are a few publications that would be helpful for playground operators, such as the Public Playground Safety Handbook written by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (2010, November), which is available for download at no cost at <http://www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/116134/325.pdf>. The ASTM F1487, Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use, can be purchased at <http://www.astm.org/Standards/F1487.htm>. The ASTM F2373 – Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specifications for Public Use Play Equipment for Children 6 Months through 23 Months can be purchased at <http://www.astm.org/Standards/F2373.htm>.

In 1997, a group of Parks and Recreation, Physical Education and private recreation professionals formed PlaySafe, LLC to provide resources that were not readily available to the public and private sectors. Today, PlaySafe, LLC is the largest, most respected and highly skilled playground, surfacing and ball field safety auditing firm in the United States. Our staff members are experts in playground safety, athletic field testing, bleacher inspections, master plans, feasibility studies and program development. Our training and seminars are informative and will make your organization the best it can be. PlaySafe, LLC staff includes Parks and Recreation, Physical Education and Community Health professionals with over 200 years of combined experience.

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