

## Information Sheet Number 14

# Inspection & Maintenance of Playgrounds

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### **General**

The safety of children on their playgrounds does not depend solely upon the initial design of the site and the selection of equipment. Its continued management and the provision of high quality inspection and maintenance programmes are essential if safe opportunities for children to play creatively are to be preserved.

There is no specific legal responsibility to provide inspection and maintenance programmes but such procedures are recommended by the Department for National Heritage and the Welsh Office, the British Standards Institute, the Health and Safety Executive, Insurers and RoSPA. Playground managers have a legal and moral responsibility of care to children using the site - and at the same time they need to meet the expectations of parents. Inspections should be to EN1176, Part 7.

### **Inspections**

Inspections should cover the whole of the site - not just the equipment. Pathways, fences, seats etc all need to be checked.

Further information on inspection methodologies is available from RoSPA, along with training where necessary.

### **Hierarchy**

A defined system of inspections is recommended for children's playgrounds:

#### ***Routine Inspection***

This looks at the equipment's basic condition, especially faults due to recent vandalism. Such inspections may be carried out by the manager or his/her staff and should be recorded on a simple sheet or book. The equipment supplier should provide a checklist – RoSPA can produce checklists if required. Frequency will vary with the site and local usage although weekly should be seen as a minimum.

#### ***Operational Inspection***

This looks in more detail at the equipment, essentially at vandalism and certain types of minor wear. Such inspections may be carried out by the manager or his/her staff and should be recorded. With a good, routine hands-on check linked to the annual inspection, the quarterly check may not be necessary. RoSPA publishes "Routine Inspection of Playgrounds" to assist with this inspection.

#### ***Annual inspection***

This should be carried out by a specialist not connected with the playground operator or manager. Essentially it looks at vandalism, minor and major wear, long-term

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structural problems, changes in Standard compliance and design practice, risk assessment etc. Such inspections are offered by insurance companies, playground equipment manufacturers, commercial companies and safety organisations, such as RoSPA. Organisations should be checked to ensure their inspections are acceptable to insurance companies and suitable professional indemnity (at least £5 million) is carried.

### **Training**

It is recommended that staff carrying out the regular inspections should have undertaken some basic training in playground inspections. Contractors should be able to provide evidence of training. Training courses are available from RoSPA. For single playground operators, the training may be linked to the annual inspection.

### **Quality control**

Where inspections are carried out by commercial companies it is helpful to have an independent random check by an independent organisation such as RoSPA. This is especially necessary for inspections which are contracted out to, for example, a landscape contractor. An internal systems audit can be useful for larger organisations.

### **Maintenance**

No inspection programme is worthwhile unless a structure exists for repairing faults and replacing parts. A system should exist for recording and checking on repairs. The manufacturer's original parts should be used if they are available.

### **Manufacturer's instructions**

No playground equipment should be purchased without details of inspection and maintenance requirements. A note should be kept of the age of the equipment and a special inspection carried out before the expiry of the warranty.

### **Surfacing**

Surfacing should be carefully checked for its soundness. Economic impact absorbency tests are available as part of the annual inspection if required.

### **Post-installation inspections**

New playgrounds and equipment should be carefully checked for compliance with claims, specifications and installation procedures before being accepted. Where only a single item is placed on a site, such inspections are uneconomic but can be carried out as part of an annual inspection since they will fall within warranty periods if there is anything wrong.