

Playground Inspection Q&A

What is the benefit of doing an inspection?

Despite improvements in playground safety and design, according to the CDC, emergency centers treat over 200,000 children aged 14 and under for playground injuries each year. 75% of the nonfatal injuries happen on public playgrounds such as those found at schools and childcare centers. 45% of playground injuries are severe, which means these children end up with concussions, internal injuries, dislocations, fractures, and even amputations. 40% of injury results in a failure to maintain.

There numerous benefits to doing regular inspections and audits for playgrounds. Our goal is to identify hazards, avoid lawsuits, reduce injury, limit liability, potentially reduce insurance rates, and protect your equipment's manufacturers warranty. Ignoring routine inspection and maintenance will only cost more money on repair replacement in the long run. Nearly 1/3 of all playground injuries or incidents can be avoided if a simple inspection and maintenance plan is followed.

What is the law about playground inspection in Indiana?

There is no federal playground safety law for the entire US. California is the only state to mandate playground inspection. Several States often urged by consumers - have passed legislation or regulations addressing playground safety. Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Wyoming have adopted all or parts of CPSC or ASTM. Just because our state does not have regulations or laws in place, does not mean you should not follow the standard. It is imperative to comply with these written standards as it is the only standard accepted in a court of law. Ignorance to these standards are no excuse, as is ignorance to the law.

How much does this cost?

Typically, an inspection will cost between \$300-1,000 per location with multiple composite structures. The cost will also depend on the size of the play structure, estimated time to complete a comprehensive analysis, and whether it is an audit or inspection. Costs also include the assistance of creating a site file for your playground. This is a small price to pay for a child's safety, and much less than a potential lawsuit.

What are your qualifications, what standards are used in the inspection?

Inspections are lead by a Certified Playground Inspector (CPSI) whose certification is recognized by the National Playground Safety Institute and NRPA (National Parks and Recreation Association) The NRPA is a leading advocacy program dedicated to the advancement of safe public parks and recreational opportunities.

Inspections and Audits are done using specialized reporting software following the current version of ASTM -17 (American Standard for Testing Materials -2017) and CPSC 2010 (Consumer Product Safety Commission).

As a CPSI, we are also held responsible to a code of conduct. We must comply with a code of professional practice. Maintaining a level of confidentiality with the client is of utmost importance. We will never report findings to other than the playground owner unless authorized to do so. We cannot talk about your playground with teachers, parents, or agencies, without your consent. We do not conduct inspections without consent of the owner. Failure of these professional standards results in our loss of professional certification.

What is the advantage of using 3rd party inspection?

Having a third party inspect your playground plain and simply eliminates biased self inspection error. Many facilities have their own CPSI's on staff, which is a great step in the right direction, however hazards could be overlooked when using the same set of eyes. Another set of eyes is worth it in the end; as internal human error is a risk.

Turf Innovations also does not sell, manufacture, or advocate for any types of playground equipment. We see inspecting and then correcting as a conflict of interest. We pride ourselves on being well connected, maintaining relationships with everyone involved with your playground. Seeking the right repair advice from all resources is important to us.



Playground Inspection Q&A

What does the inspector actually do?

During the site visit, we will take careful measurements and photos, to compare the condition of the equipment with the current CPSC and ASTM safety standards. We will climb, pull, jump, and crawl all over/ under the play structures, giving it the same rigorous play that it receives every day from the children. We will check the over all site of the play structures down to every bolt that holds them together. We also carry a special set of tools/ probes to check for compliance.

In some cases, a playground audit is needed instead of an inspection. What is the difference? Playground inspections identify only those standards with which your playground does not comply. Audits are lengthy detailed reports comparing your playground to the current standard.

The following situations are recommended for an audit:

- never have had a playground inspection before
- have recently completed major renovations or opened a new facility
- have opened a new playground area
- are considering future renovations
- are facing legal ramifications
- new Playground standards published

What happens after the inspection?

After the inspection or audit we will prepare a custom written report for your site file. The report will also list action items or work orders if applicable. The report will also contain photos of non compliant areas. If requested, we will also prepare custom inspection forms for staff to perform their own high level weekly/ monthly inspection.

How often should I do inspections?

Inspection frequency is based off of many factors. Manufacture information/ instruction, frequency of use, age of users, accessibility, and age of equipment, type of surfacing are all factors taken into consideration. Environmental factors such as climate, soil, drainage, etc. can affect inspection frequency. Each site is unique and should be treated as such.

What if some of my playground equipment is found non-compliant?

If play equipment is found non-compliant, it is our intention to inform the client of necessary reasonable actions needed to comply with the standard. We rank hazards according to priority level. Any Level 1 hazards should be immediately attended to if found. Our job is to suggest reasonable changes, improve the safety of the playground.

Why can't I just train my staff to do this?

Initial audits and inspection should be done by a trained CPSI. We are trained to look for certain hazards and risk a normal person would not see. We are also checking for equipment compliance that many may not be aware of. What looks safe to the outside eye is actually not when taking a look at the standards. We take a comprehensive approach to your site using our knowledge. In a nutshell, we are playground nerds and know every which way a kid can injure themselves. It only takes 3lbs of force for 3 minutes for a head entrapment to strangle a child. Do you know what to look for?

Remember, just having us do the inspection alone does not constitute a comprehensive safety program. It is not just our job to maintain the safety of your playground, it is everyone's responsibility. A comprehensive program includes audit, inspection, maintenance. This involves your internal staff as well. We will assist your staff in creating a file of documentation and procedures for your site. This includes information regarding surfacing / equipment compliances, audits, parts list, manufacturers info, bids, accident reports, work orders, and repairs. Having these types of files, procedures, and contingency plans in place limits your exposure to liability. We stress being proactive, not reactive.

