



A PLAYCORE Company

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAYGROUND MAINTENANCE

Do you remember being a child and playing on your local playground? It could have been a park down the street from your house, your elementary school, or even the really cool playground across town that you would beg your parents to take you to. Now, for quite a few of us, these memories also come with stories of the condition of that said playground. The metal rocketship that stood twenty feet tall and had exposed asphalt below it. Or the swingset that had the loose top beam that would wobble if you swung hard enough. These might have been fun challenges at the time but actually present a serious potential injury to children.

Maintenance is a crucial element to any playground to not only ensure the longevity of the equipment, but for the protection of the children using it. Let us dive into the difference between maintenance schedules and the factors of each.

After any playground purchase, it is important to schedule a maintenance schedule for the life of that playground. This should be a well-documented schedule that follows the manufacturer's recommendations and can be signed off by an experienced and knowledgeable inspector. We recommend a staff member that has his/her CPSI certificate. Please note, it is important that every playground receives a comprehensive check by a CPSI certified individual after installation has been completed.

When reviewing playground maintenance, you can separate it into two categories: low and high maintenance. Let us start with low maintenance items first.¹

Low maintenance items can be scheduled once a quarter or semi-annually. These items should be

¹ Playcraft Systems © Playground Inspection & Maintenance Guide

² National Recreation and Park Association CPSI Course

routine checks of factors already reviewed on the initial inspection after the playground was installed. This includes protrusions, head and neck entrapments, rust, loose components/hardware, damaged equipment, and safety stickers/signs, to only name a few. All of these items should be crossed referenced to the playground manufacturer's maintenance guide and recorded. All notes should be documented and labeled with one of the six inspection codes. These codes can be found within your maintenance manual, or through the CPSI certification guide. Any maintenance item that poses a risk to safety should be handled immediately. All other items should be dated and a schedule put in place to get the item fixed. Now let us look at some high inspection items.¹

High inspection items should be handled on a daily or weekly basis. These issues are typically caused by weather or vandalism on the playground. Such issues may include debris on the site, vandalism to equipment, standing water, blocked pathways, and inadequate surfacing. Similar to low maintenance, high maintenance inspections should be recorded. All issues should be handled while on-site or scheduled shortly after. If the issue presents a serious risk, the

playground should be blocked off from use until the issue is resolved.¹

These routine maintenance inspections can seem tedious up front, but can ensure the life of the playground and most importantly a potential injury. As most playground manufacturers will state in their maintenance guides, these routine checks are mandatory to claim anything against their warranty if an issue arises. Also, if an injury occurs on the playground, these routine checks will be used to display proper maintenance has been performed. It has been estimated that at least 33% of playground accidents could be avoided with a planned maintenance program.²

If you would like to learn more about proper playground maintenance, please visit resources.playcraftsystems.com/playground-maintenance, or join us for one of our Playground Maintenance webinars.

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