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## Diary Dates

### Kidsafe Playground Training Sessions 2005:

Ph: 9845 0890 to register for venues:

#### Early childhood:

- Sutherland 29th June
- Cooma 2nd August
- Shellharbour 16th August

#### Local Govt. & Industry:

- ACT/ Canberra region on Wed 3rd August
- Shellharbour 17th Aug

#### Accredited Inspectors

Course: 3 day course  
 28th, 29th & 30th  
 September 2005

**Schools Tree Day -**  
 Friday 29th July

**National Tree Day -**  
 Sunday 31st July

Information on how to get involved and register your site;

[www.planetark.com.au](http://www.planetark.com.au)

Issue 17

Autumn / Winter 2005

Winter is a great time for children to play outdoors with crisp mornings and mild days increasing the time in which they can play without tiring. At this time of the year, loose clothing such as scarves as well as the ever present toggles on clothing including hats, hoods and pants pose an increased risk of entrapment on equipment while the child is in motion such as on a swing, slide, monkey bar or dropping down from an elevated height such as decking or a fireman's type pole.

It is important to note that strangulations from loose clothing and toggles including those on hats have resulted in deaths overseas and there have been several 'near misses' reported in Australia in supervised early childhood settings and schools. Please notify parents of this issue and request they not send children with toggles in clothing to your centre—they can always remove the cords.

### Free Playground Fact Sheets

Fact sheets on a range of subjects are available from our website. Go to [www.kidsafensw.org](http://www.kidsafensw.org) select 'Playground Safety' and click on 'Safety Information Sheets'. Did you know that there is now a restriction on the use of Copper Chromium Arsenate or CCA treated timber in playground settings? Would you like further information and alternative treatments that are permitted? The following is an extract from our Fact Sheet titled; 'Timber Treatment'

**In Australia CCA and other preservatives are approved and regulated by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) and treatment levels are set by Australian Standards. The APVMA have reviewed CCA treated timber and on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2005 announced a 12 month phase out of CCA treatment for timber used for new construction of playground equipment, decking, handrails, garden and park furniture. The major concern has been the potential for leaching out of arsenic from the treated timber. This follows trends in both Europe and America. The APVMA has no regulatory authority over existing CCA treated items and has made no recommendation for the dismantling of existing structures.**

As a precaution if you do have play equipment constructed with CCA treated timber the Department of Health NSW suggests if these are in good condition these should be maintained with a coating of an oil-based polyurethane or oil-based paint. It is also recommended to ensure children wash their hands thoroughly with soap after contact with CCA treated timbers and avoid eating while around it.

### Product Warning: Giant Saucers

Does your service have a giant saucer that also serves as a rocker, sandpit or mini pool? The prior models of these units that were manufactured without breathing holes have been known to form an airlock when placed concave on a flat surface such as wet pour rubber. This may result in a child becoming trapped inside the saucer with a limited air supply. If you have such a unit please contact your supplier. If breathing holes are to be added ensure there are no sharp edges or entrapments for fingers.

## Playground Equipment Product Information AS 4685:2004 by Dr David Eager

In addition to specifications for design, installation, manufacture, plus general requirements for safety and test methods, the new playground Standard AS 4685: 2004 sets out information that is to be provided by the manufacturer. This, in combination with the requirements set out in AS/NZS 4486.1: 1997, gives the purchaser a good range of advice to follow when purchasing equipment. The following article sets out this information to enable educated decisions to be made prior to purchasing equipment.

All playground equipment is to be marked legibly and permanently with the following:

- Name, address, and ABN of manufacturer, importer or other supplier
- Equipment reference and year of manufacture
- Base level mark for the undersurface. This will allow installers to know at what depth to install posts but the manufacturer will have to know what type of undersurfacing you will be installing as that will vary the level of the base level mark. This will also mean that where organic materials are used you will have a line on all posts which will show you when you need to top up your organic material.

NOTE: Manufacturers, importers or suppliers making a statement of compliance with a standard on a product, packaging or promotional material related to that product are advised to ensure that such compliance is capable of being verified.

It is **highly recommended** that councils, schools, day-care centre and other purchasing bodies specify that copies of the equipment test reports be supplied by the manufacturers/supplier. Other information to be provided by the manufacturer/supplier should include:

- General product information
- Pre-information
- Installation information
- Inspection and maintenance information

### General product information and Pre-information:

**Pre-information** It is recommended that the manufacturers/suppliers provide information concerning the safety of the playground equipment prior to entering into a purchase contract. This information should include:

- The minimum space
- Surfacing requirements (including Free Height of Fall)
- The overall dimensions of the equipment
- The intended user age range
- The availability and cost of spare parts
- Certification of conformity to AS 4685:2004

### Installation information

It is recommended that the manufacturers/suppliers provide installation information for correct assembly, erection and placement of equipment. The installation information should include:

- The minimum space requirements and safe clearances
  - The erection sequence (eg assembly instructions and details)
  - Surfacing requirements (including FHoF) and the need to test the installed impact attenuation surfacing prior to final acceptance of the playground
  - The equipment orientation, where necessary, in relation to the sun and wind
  - The removal of packaging and assembly aids prior to the playground being opened to the public
  - Equipment parts identification
-

### Installation information cont.

- The need for any special tools, lifting devices, templates or other assembly aids to be used and any precautionary measures to be taken (where necessary torque values should be provided)
- Special instructions if a particular landscape profile is necessary for safe operation. (eg to achieve the maximum FHoF on a sloping site)
- Pre-site preparation (eg removal of tree stumps, provision of adequate and appropriate sub-surface drainage and sub-base)
- Need for and details of the application of any painting or treatment (and how regularly to apply maintenance coats)
- Details of the required footings, anchorage in the ground and the design and location of the footings, instructions that due consideration should be taken of any additional requirements (eg BCA additional wind loads in cyclone affected areas)
- Construction space required for equipment erection
- Matching aids where necessary (eg instruction signage)

It is recommended that the manufacturers/suppliers provide drawings, diagrams and documentation necessary for inspection, maintenance and checking of correct operation and, when appropriate, repair of the equipment.

- This documentation should specify the frequency with which the equipment or its components should be inspected or maintained and should provide guidance on the following, where relevant:
- Routine visual inspection (eg missing parts, sharp edges, wear ...)
- Operational inspection (eg every 1 to 3 months)
- Annual main inspection (eg sealed for life components, impact attenuation surface testing ...)
- Servicing points and methods of servicing (eg lubrication, tightening of bolts, re-tensioning of ropes...)
- Identification of spare parts.
- Any additional measures to be taken during the run-in period (eg tightening of fastenings, tensioning of ropes ...)
- The need to keep drainage holes clear
- Surfacing shall be maintained (eg level of loose fill materials.)

It is also highly recommended that departments within Local Councils apply for one off extraordinary funding to cover the initial cost of upgrading equipment to bring it in line with the new Standards. This may have to be carried over a couple of years depending on the amount and detail of upgrades required.

### Q & A on the new Standard by Dr David Eager

#### What is Minimum Space?

The Playground Equipment Standard AS 4685 introduces the concept of minimum space for playground equipment. The minimum space has three components:

- Space occupied by the equipment;
- Falling space which is the space projected up from the fall zone to the Free Height of Fall from the equipment. As a generally rule falling spaces may overlap. However with particular classes of equipment overlap of the falling space is not permitted and the reader is referred to Parts 2-6 of the Standard; and
- Free space, if the particular equipment operation provides forced movement.

Continued over page.

## Q & A on the new Standard: Continued from page 3

### What is Free Space?

Free space is the space in, on or around the equipment that can be occupied by a user undergoing forced movement and it can only occur when the child's movement is determined by the operation of the equipment.

### What is Forced Movement?

This is where the child's movement is forced, restricted or limited by the construction of the play-ground equipment for example by sliding, swinging, rocking, revolving. Sliding movement can be vertical such as a fireman's pole or at an inclination in the case of an embankment slide.

### What is the purpose of Free Space?

The free space is to protect the child from dangerous situations that can occur due to forced movement that result from their use of items such as slippery dips or merry-go-rounds.

### Is overlapping Free Space permitted?

Unless stated otherwise in Parts 2-6 of the Standard for a particular forced movement application, there shall be no overlapping of adjacent free spaces, or of free space and falling space. This requirement does not apply to the common space between separate pieces of equipment designed to provide continuity of play.

The overlap of free spaces does not necessarily create a hazard and needs to be critically assessed. Where we have platforms that have more than one attached forced movement device and the forced movement is in the same direction and orientation the risk exposed to the child is low. For example two fireman's poles side by side with an age appropriate separation, or two identical parallel slides with an appropriate separation.

However, where the direction and/or orientation of the forced movement is different such as when a fireman's pole is situated adjacent to a slide as indicated in the adjacent picture we have a potentially dangerous situation and overlapping free space should not be allowed!

Manufacturers and installers need to apply the rules of risk management to each particular situation and configuration and ask the question 'how is this equipment going to be used and what is the potential level of risk to the child'?

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