

MAINTENANCE GUIDEBOOK IV LANDSCAPE AND GENERAL GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CHAPTER SEVEN - PLAY AREAS

SECTION A GENERAL

1. INTRODUCTION

The play area is an integral element of any multi-family housing development, since it provides the primary setting for children to interact with their peers. Providing and maintaining an enjoyable, accessible, and safe play environment is therefore one of the grounds-maintenance staff's responsibilities.

2. RESIDENT COOPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Successful upkeep of play areas requires attention from both residents and grounds personnel, and demands continued maintenance by staff on a year-round basis. Refer to Chapter One, Section A-3, for information concerning resident cooperation.

SECTION B PLAY AREAS

Play areas should accommodate the range of activities undertaken by children of all age groups. Play equipment for small children should be located on "soft" surfaces, such as sand or wood mulch, in order to reduce the potential for injuries. When refurbishing play areas, maintenance staff should consider each of the surface types listed below.

1. GRASS AREAS

Since they are capable of accommodating all age groups and provide a venue for the spontaneous development of children's games, grass areas are an essential component of any play area. Grasses should be maintained in accordance with site-wide lawn-care maintenance efforts. In addition, maintenance staff should do the following:

- Inspect grass areas for such foreign objects as broken glass or other debris. Providing trash bins near play areas will reduce the amount of debris left in fields.
- Remove such hazards as branches and rocks. Any pits left by this removal should be filled with

soil and sufficiently compacted to withstand constant activity.

- Since leaves create a fall hazard, they shouldn't be allowed to accumulate on play areas, even if this requires maintenance staff to rake play areas more frequently than other lawns during the autumn months.

2. SAND LOTS

Maintenance of sand lots should include the following:

- Rototill sand beds monthly to their design depth, or 12 inches, whichever is greater, during seasons of heavy use.
- Rake and remove foreign objects. Provide trash bins nearby.
- Replenish sand to achieve design depth as needed.
- Sand-lot retaining structures should be inspected once every two weeks for cracks, splinters, or loose and uneven joints. Sand and repaint or revarnish wood retaining structures as needed.

3. RUBBERIZED SURFACES

Rubber-surface maintenance should include the following:

- Remove foreign objects and debris daily.
- Inspect surfaces at least once a week for bulges, cracks, tears, and upturned edges. Any protruding edges or corners should be re-attached with a manufacturer-approved glue.
- Keep replacement surface material on hand. Tiles with tears capable of creating a safety hazard (for instance, large enough to catch a child's finger) should be replaced as soon as possible. If the surface has been laid as a sheet, torn or cracked areas should either be sealed with a manufacturer-approved sealant or should be cut out and replaced.
- Eliminate potholes, which can collect water. Rainwater should be mopped or swept and snow shoveled away immediately from the surface. Break up ice or sand it to prevent accidents. While the rubberized surface should have a skid-proof surface, sand should be applied to the surface after snow removal to prevent slipping.

4. WOOD-CHIP AREAS

Maintenance of play areas with wood-chip surfaces should include the following:

- Rake and remove foreign objects regularly. Provide trash bins nearby.
- Replenish wood mulch to achieve design depth as needed.
- Inspect wood-mulch retaining structures once every two weeks for cracks, splinters, or loose and uneven joints. It is important to maintain the edging material retaining the wood mulch.

SECTION C PLAY EQUIPMENT

Some general guidelines for the maintenance of play equipment include the following:

- Ensure that foundations and other hard objects are adequately covered by safety surfacing at all times.
- Inspect equipment routinely, repair or replace loose or missing components, and close equipment that creates a hazard for children. In addition, residents should be encouraged to observe children's use of the equipment and to report any observed problems with play equipment to the maintenance staff.
- Correct safety hazards immediately or prohibit access until the problem is corrected.

1. MAINTENANCE OF METAL EQUIPMENT

Maintain metal play equipment according to the following guidelines:

- Check for sharp edges, loose connections, exposed foundations, missing components, and exposed nuts and bolts.
- Replenish all worn paint or other surfacing routinely with manufacturer-authorized coatings.
- Replace corroded pipes and surfaces according to manufacturer's specifications.

2. MAINTENANCE OF WOOD EQUIPMENT

Check for sharp edges, loose connections, exposed foundations, splinters, and cracks in the wood that may pinch children. Wood should be treated with a water sealant or other material per manufacturer's direction. Repair or replace worn paint routinely with manufacturer-authorized coatings.

3. MAINTENANCE OF FIBERGLASS AND PLASTIC EQUIPMENT

Check for sharp edges, loose connections, exposed foundations, splinters, and cracks in the fiberglass and plastic that may injure children. Since fiberglass and plastic play equipment is not easily repaired, damaged play equipment should be removed from the site immediately to prevent injury.

4. MAINTENANCE OF ATHLETIC COURTS

Athletic courts require regular maintenance, like most structures in the landscape, to extend their life span and encourage use. Courts should be swept regularly of debris to minimize injury to users and minimize damage to court surfaces. Basketball hoops and nets, as well as fences surrounding athletic courts, should be checked regularly for wear-and-tear and repaired or replaced as needed.

END OF CHAPTER SEVEN