

Nature Play Spaces & Safety

Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature

Applicable Guidelines

If you are creating nature play spaces intended for children 12 years old and under, you should consult the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's *Public Playground Safety Handbook*. The CPSC Handbook is available online at no charge at: cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/325.pdf

In Maryland, compliance with these guidelines is not legally required at the state level. However, some local



jurisdictions, insurance carriers, agencies, or others may require compliance with the CPSC Handbook. While design professionals will verify applicable requirement for their clients, those undertaking a natural

play space project without professional design assistance are responsible for verifying requirements specific to them.

Safety Advice

Certified Playground Safety Inspectors (CPSI) apply the CPSC Guidelines and the relevant ASTM Standards for Public Playground Safety and Surfacing to actual situations in play spaces. They can advise on preventive maintenance, and on applying the Guidelines in situations where manufactured play equipment is not involved.

CPSI's are on staff at many state, county, and local parks departments, educational, and environmental agencies. A CPSI may be consulted before, during, and after design and installation of a nature play space on safety concerns and precautions. Independent CPSI's are also available. To find one near you, contact the National Recreation and Park Association's online CPSI Registry at: ipv.nrpa.org/CPSI_registry/default.aspx

Important Elements for Nature Play Space Safety and Liability

- Design the space according to the CPSC
- Conduct regular safety inspections, keep a log of inspections and recommended or completed improvements / repairs
- Consult your insurance policy and if necessary, update before construction of the play area
- Include proper signage - with phone #s, hours etc

Accessibility

The 2010 Americans with Disabilities Accessibility Guidelines became effective on March 15, 2011. The ADA Guidelines for Play Areas are included in this amended version of the ADA. Any new play areas, and many alterations to existing play areas, including those under 1,000 square feet are subject to the ADA. The play area guidelines include access to parking, routes to the play area, number of play areas that must be accessible and play area amenities such as picnic tables and restrooms. The ADA Guidelines for Play Areas: access-board.gov/play/finalrule.htm

Note the section called, "Unique Play Areas," which states, "A play area is a portion of a site containing play components designed and constructed for children. Play components are defined broadly to include elements intended to generate specific opportunities for play, socialization, or learning. Play components may be manufactured or natural."



Visit the Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature at dnr.maryland.gov/cin/nps/

