

# PARKS RECREATION

JULY 2007

## TOPIC: Playground Safety

### Trend / Issue

Playgrounds are second only to motor vehicle accidents when it comes to injuries to 19 year olds and under.

### Background

Ontario's emergency departments received 8,734 visits due to playground injuries in 2004-2005; this is an increase from 8,698 visits in 2002-2003 according to new data released by the *Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)*. The report revealed that:

- Children aged five to nine sustained the highest number of playground injuries (54%) and also had the greatest number of hospital stays of at least one night due to playground injuries, with 335 or 61% of overall cases requiring hospitalization.
- Children 10 to 14 had the second highest proportion of ER visits for playground injuries with 2,018 or 23 percent.
- Children younger than five had the third highest number of visits 1,469 or 17 percent.
- Of the hospitalization injuries the most common 51 percent involved bone fractures to the arms, wrists and elbows.

### Impact

While accidents may always occur in play situations, playground operators and staff need proper training in order to minimize the risk to children and reverse the trend in the rising numbers of injuries. Training, maintenance and regular inspections will help address common issues. Specific and detailed documentation of inspections is also essential for proper risk management.

### Recommendations

- Have play station equipment meet the CSA children's play spaces and equipment standard as soon as possible.
- Have a certified inspector do a monthly playground inspection and fully document what was inspected and what deficiencies were found.

- Give inspectors the authority to close playground sites if deficiencies are found.
- Staff working in parks should be given proper training in risk management and playground safety and what to look for during a safety inspection.
- Staff should meet the requirements to be a Registered Playground Practitioner in the Province of Ontario.
- Staff working in parks should be able to identify rusting, protruding angles, breakage, loose bolts and swing poles that aren't firmly anchored, as well as an adequate cushion area especially under slides and swings. Staff should have an understanding of the Drop Test. These mini-inspections should also be fully documented and not just noted as exception or deficiency documentation.
- Signage regarding age suitability for play structures should also be posted.

### Links

- To read the entire report about playground safety released by CIHI, visit [www.cihi.ca](http://www.cihi.ca)
- To learn about the Ontario Playground Academy and becoming a Registered Playground Practitioner, visit [www.opassoc.on.ca](http://www.opassoc.on.ca)
- To learn about the Canadian Playground Safety Institute, visit [www.cpra.ca](http://www.cpra.ca)
- To find out more about The Children's Playspaces and Equipment Standard, established by the Canadian Standards Association, or to order a copy of the this standard visit [www.csa.ca](http://www.csa.ca)

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