



Determination of Fall Height

Compliance with
Standards, & Liability Issues

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Play is a self-directed activity, and it is the role of the Designer and Owner/Operator of the playgrounds to provide as much play value as possible while considering the prevention of injury that meets their policies. Standards, in this case ASTM and CSA and the CPSC Handbook on Public Playground Safety, provide the minimum performance criteria that must be followed.

Expansion of existing “post and platform designs, net climbers and the introduction of truly unique play elements not currently contemplated in these Standards have been coming to the market for a number of years. These often place the Owner/Operator or their Consultant/Designer in an awkward position of determining the performance requirements for the “protective surfacing” that reduces the severity of the injury resulting from an impact with that surface after a fall. The performance of the surfacing system and the severity of the injury could have significant consequences for both the Owner/Operator and their Consultant/Designer.

This presentation is to stimulate conversation as to the determination of “Fall Height” as stated in the relevant standards and some examples of how these might not be the same in reality.

Learning objectives on play include:

- Understanding that play is self-directed with children making the own rules.
- That play is not always as intended by an adult, manufacturer or operator.
- Children will play demonstrating reasonable foreseeable use.
- Falls and injuries are a part of play.
- The selection of the surface performance can determine injury severity.

Learning objectives on current standards include:

- They provide the minimum standard of care.
- What the current play structure and protective surfacing standards are.
- Definitions for fall height and designated play surfaces.
- Falls are the #1 cause of playground injuries.

Understanding that playground standards:

- Do not always consider all aspects of reasonably foreseeable use.
- Can leave the Design professional and Owner/Operator needing to consider better practices.
- Are sometimes not universally agreed to.



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Consideration of how Standards can help the Owner/Operator or their Consultant/Designer:

- Specifying performance to the minimum of a standard is critical.
- Consider instituting better practices.
- Using ASTM F3351 to increase surfacing ‘functional longevity’.
- Contract submittals.
- Importance of Field Testing of installed surfaces
- Importance of performance-based warranties to protect surfacing assets.

This Course should stimulate discussions between Owner/Operators, their Consultant/Designers and providers of structures and surfacing.

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