Playground Safety

Indoor and outdoor playgrounds are an important part of children's ministry. To help, the risk management experts at Brotherhood Mutual have some serious advice to keep your church's play areas fun and safe.

Use equipment designed for playgrounds. While it may be tempting to create a design that's unique to your church, it's not always the safest way to play. Companies that design and build playground equipment adhere to strict industry standards, which reduce the likelihood of injuries.

Hire professional installers. Installing new playground equipment is not a job for do-it-yourselfers. Using experts to do the installation decreases the likelihood of mistakes and could limit injuries.

Install proper safety surfaces. Falls are the primary cause of playground injuries, so the material underneath and around playground equipment should be soft and shock absorbent. Outdoors, this typically means sand, pea gravel, wood chips or rubber mats. Indoor playgrounds should have rubber flooring.

Perform regular maintenance. Clean playgrounds regularly. Be alert for hazards, such as broken glass or sharp metal objects. Dirty equipment is an indication that you may not have kept up with the routine maintenance and repair. Walkways should be clear of trash and clutter.

Conduct regular inspections. Look for worn or missing parts; loose bolts; sharp edges; damaged hooks; torn or frayed safety netting or ropes; loose stitches on webbing; any exposed components that could trip, pinch or crush; splintered or cracked wood; or improperly lubricated moving parts.

Replace when necessary. Remove equipment that's associated with frequent injuries. It's also wise to budget funds to purchase new equipment to replace that which is worn out due to weather exposure or usual wear and tear.

Learn more about building and maintaining a safe playground in the Public Playground Safety Handbook, which is a free publication of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

http://search.cpsc.gov/search?site=en_us.public_site&output=xml_no_dtd&getfields=*&tlen=120&client=CPSC_frontend&proxystylesheet=CPSC_frontend&filter=0&q=Public%20Playground%20Safety%20Handbook