

**Playground Safety NEWS**

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- Find out if your playground's surface is safe. Complete a quick checklist on page 2 to see if your playground needs a *surfacerlift*.
- The 2000 Safety Schools are just around the corner! Find out more on page 2.

**Mark your calendar!**

Upcoming events related to playground safety you won't want to miss.

**May**

**19**  
 Iowa Playground Safety Network Conference, IA  
 515-280-2719

**June**

**28 – July 1**  
 Nat'l Association of School Nurses, WI  
 973-267-8938

**July**

**10 – 14**  
 Playground Safety School, MA

**August**

**2 – 5**  
 National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS), IA; 800-782-9519  
**7 – 10**  
 National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS), IA; 800-782-9519

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## 2000 Playground Safety Week announced

Playground Safety Day has been so successful that we're expanding it to Playground Safety Week! The National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS) has proclaimed April 24 – 28 as National Playground Safety Week 2000.

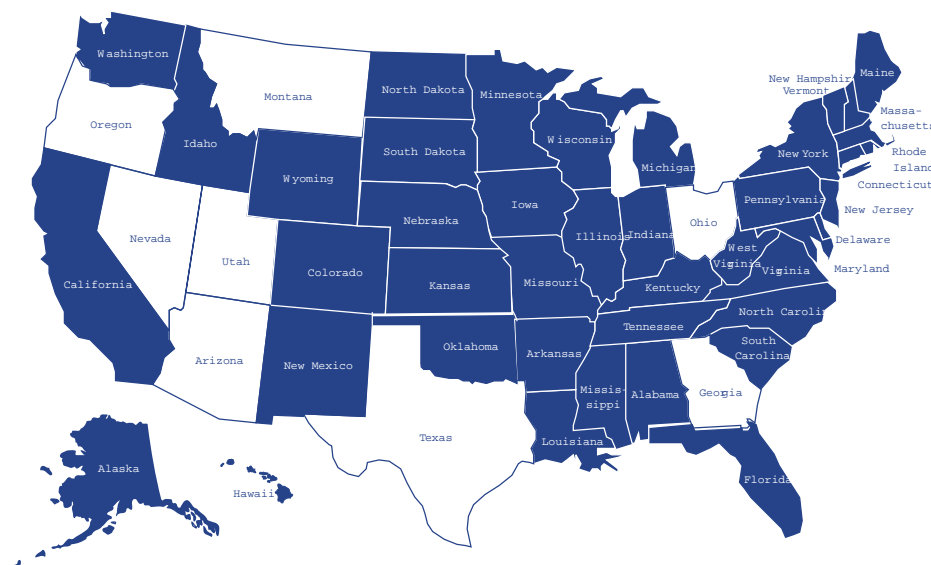
We have contacted all 50 state governors asking them to join us in celebrating this week by issuing a state proclamation, but we still need your help. Many states require a state resident to initiate the proclamation process. You can assist by promoting playground safety in your state. Contact NPPS for sample letters and proclamations to forward to your governor.

During National Playground Safety Week, Dr. Donna Thompson, Director of NPPS, is scheduled to appear on a national news program with Andrew Kidd, the NPPS poster child. Andrew and his mother will be featured teaching playground safety to a class of elementary children.

Dr. Thompson will also release the results of our nationwide survey of playgrounds. This is the first time such a comprehensive survey has been attempted. Samples of playgrounds in all 50 states have been surveyed, and we are analyzing the data to see just where improvements are needed.

These results will not only be released on national TV, but the results of each state will be available for individual viewing and

**New this year ...** We're enlisting the help of elementary schools and classes in those states that have not yet proclaimed Playground Safety Week. Students are invited to send letters, drawings, photos or whatever their creativity comes up with to help urge their governors to declare our week of playground safety awareness. For more details, check out our web site at [www.uni.edu/playground](http://www.uni.edu/playground) and click on Playground Safety Day, or call us at 800-554-PLAY.



**HAS YOUR STATE DECLARED?**  
 The darkened states above have declared April 24 – 28, 2000, Playground Safety Week. Let's keep working to get all 50 states!

downloading from our web site. Check to see how your state compares to others. The survey shows what each state is doing right, as well as areas that could use improvement. In addition, we have a blank report card available on our web site that can be printed and used to evaluate any playground.

Join us in spreading the awareness for playground safety. Contact your governor if National Playground Safety Week 2000 has not been officially declared in your state.

To see if your state has joined in our efforts, check the map above for states declaring as of March 20, 2000, or look to the Playground Safety Day page on our web site for the most up-to-date information. Click on each state to reveal a copy of the signed proclamation declaring April 24-28, 2000, Playground Safety Week.

NPPS thanks you for your help in making Playground Safety Week 2000 a success.

### NPPS national survey complete

As part of the 2000 Playground Safety Week events, NPPS will release report cards from each of the 50 states. Grades are based on the results of our two-year study concerning the safety of our nation's playgrounds: parks, schoolyards and child care centers.

The NPPS staff is now busy analyzing the information gathered from the most comprehensive survey ever done on playgrounds.

Thanks to university students and faculty across the nation involved in the data collection, as well as consultants Sarah Rich and Jane Moorman, who ensured that we received information from all 50 states.

Watch the web site to see if your state made the grade. A complete summary of the study will be available May 1, 2000, by contacting the NPPS office.

## NPPS web site to receive updates, new look

We're happy to report the visits to our web site have greatly increased over the past several months. The site provides much valuable information on playground safety and we are excited that it's being used as a resource.

Keep watching the site over the next months. We're making some changes and adding a new look. Let us know what you think!



[www.uni.edu/playground](http://www.uni.edu/playground)

## Plan now to attend the National Playground Safety School 2000

Where can you get the answers to all your playground safety questions? The National Playground Safety School, that's where!

This year, the School will run two sessions, August 2 – 5 and August 7 – 10, at the NPPS home base at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls.

All those working in the area of playground safety are encouraged to attend, including military and civilian personnel on bases involved with kids; federal, state, county and city officials concerned with children's safety; child care specialists; park and recreation professionals; and school administrators and nurses.

The Safety School's curriculum is designed to provide participants with interactive and experiential learning that allow attendees to return home and make positive changes to playgrounds in their communities.

During the three and half days of instruction, participants review playground safety issues, learn to plan and design areas for safe play, and discover ways to affect change

Being both a CPSI and a member of the National Playground Contractor's Association, I feel the National Program for Playground Safety provides the final link in complete playground safety.

Roger Davis  
CPSI, NPCA  
Shelby, NC

in their communities.

Those attending also have the option of receiving National Program for Playground Safety SAFE certification. This vital credential prepares individuals to continue to raise awareness of playground safety issues, particularly in the areas of supervision, age-appropriate design, fall surfacing and equipment maintenance.

Sign up now to receive the early registration discount for our August sessions! To register or receive a brochure with further information, contact the UNI Continuing Education Office at 800-782-9519.

## Does your playground need a surfacelift?

Spring is just around the corner, and for many parts of the country experiencing winter indoors, that means children are heading back out to the playgrounds. Before they get back in the "swing" of things, make sure the appropriate surface is under and around equipment.

Use this quick checklist to see if your playground's surfacing is appropriate.

1. Are suitable surfacing materials being used? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>NOTE:</b> Asphalt, concrete, dirt and grass are not suitable surfacing materials.
2. Is the the equipment less than 8 feet high? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>NOTE:</b> NPPS recommends there be no equipment higher than 8 feet; current Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines note only one type of material suitable for 10 feet or lower at compressed depth.
3. Is the depth of the loose fill materials appropriate to the height of the equipment? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>NOTE:</b> Consult page 5 of the CPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety for the correct ratio. NPPS recommends 12 inches of suitable loose fill material under and around equipment.
4. Are surface materials in the correct use zone? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>NOTE:</b> Use zones should extend 6 feet around stationary equipment. Use zones for swings should extend in front of and behind swings a distance equal to twice the height from the surfacing to the pivot point. Use zones to the front of the exit regions of slides should extend a distance of 4 feet plus the height of the slide.

If you answered "no" to any of these four questions, do not allow children on equipment until appropriate surfacing is present. Let's make sure that all surfacing adds up to safety.

# LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING!

**KIM HEATH**, a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) and Playground Safety Grants Administrator, writes to tell us about some exciting things happening in Mecklenburg County (Charlotte), North Carolina. As part of North Carolina's innovative Early Childhood Initiative, *Smart Start*, priority one hazards (conditions that could cause death or a disabling injury) have been identified on playgrounds and grant funds awarded to childcare centers submitting proposals to eliminate these hazards.

Facilities identified as having priority one hazards were offered employee training, playground evaluation audits and technical assistance to undergo renovation and replacement projects. Thanks to grant funding and many helping hands, nearly all playgrounds in the county are free of priority one hazards.

Mecklenburg County has committed \$2.1 million in state funds toward making playgrounds at childcare centers safer for children. Across the state of North Carolina, the number of dollars committed to making playgrounds safer is growing each year.

**DARCY ARCAND**, Director of Citizen Services and Information for the Town of Manchester, Connecticut, tells us of her community's accomplishments in the area of playground safety. Manchester has gone to great efforts to upgrade its parks and playgrounds, making them safer and accessible to children of all abilities.

The town's proactive approach to playground safety has really paid off. Tom Bowler, a CPSI with Total Playground Consulting Services, undertook an evaluation of their playgrounds. Using the NPPS's Playground Safety Report Card, he concluded that Manchester's average score in playground safety was a "B."

Playgrounds from the entire town were evaluated, including those yet to be renovated. According to Bowler, "The Town of Manchester is well ahead of most towns with their proactive approach to safety."



Playgrounds in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, have undergone reconstruction and renovations to become free of priority one hazards.



After evaluating all playgrounds in Manchester, Connecticut, the town receives a "B." Much of their proactive approach to playground safety has really helped them make the grade.

## MORE GOOD NEWS

**KEVIN O'CONNELL**, EMT-I, CPSI for Seymour Ambulance/Safe Communities of the Lower Naugatuck Valley, Connecticut, has continued to perform playground inspections in the Safe Communities' six-town catch basin.

The organization has recently expanded to include an additional three towns, bringing the total number of people benefitting from this program to more than 110,000. The organization is happy to report there have been no serious injuries since the implementation of this program.

**PATRICIA BUNKER**, safety chairperson for the VFW Aux. 8315 in Schertz, Texas, writes, "We have won many safety awards for assistance to our local elementary schools with police and fire safety programs. We appreciate your brochures on playground safety to aid in our program."

**BARBARA NEWTON**, Director of the First Presbyterian Preschool in Columbus, Indiana, writes, "Thank you so very much for all of the useful information that you have sent."

"We have completed our new playground and I was happy to include all of your facts to ensure that we not only received new safe equipment, but surfacing as well."

## NPPS staff news

**Dr. Donna Thompson**, Director, has won the AALR Outstanding Achievement Award. This award is given to individuals demonstrating unusual leadership in the area of recreation, leisure or other fields closely related to AALR programs.

Dr. Thompson and Dr. Hudson have also been selected for a \$10,000 Seed Grant from the NASA Space Grant Program in Iowa for 2000. The grant requires employing two students to help with research. UNI students Steve Randall and Cheryl Woolm are helping research Provisions of Space-Related Play Areas for Children in Airports.

**Dr. Susan Hudson**, Project Associate, has won the American Association for Leisure and Recreation (AALR) Honor Award. This is the highest recognition from AALR, given to one of its members who has contributed to recreation leadership through teaching, research or administration.

**Dr. Mick Mack**, Project Coordinator, is involved in an extensive research project concerning the resiliency of playground surface materials.

Over the past several months, he has been analyzing and interpreting the impact attenuation

findings. The next step is to organize the five notebooks of statistics into a number of condensed manuscripts which will then be sent for review and possible publication in various professional journals.

This peer review process is necessary to help establish the credibility of our research. In other words, scientists review our work to certify that we used proper scientific methodology.

Presently, one manuscript has been provisionally accepted by a scientific journal. Another is in the writing stage.

# LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING!

We'd love to hear what's happening in your area to promote playground safety. Just complete this form, attach your news and mail to: NPPS, School of HPELS, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, 50614-0618 or playground-safety@uni.edu. Watch for your submission in upcoming issues!

**Please notify NPPS of any address changes with this form as well.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Fax ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

My address has changed. Please update your records.