

## *play and recreation surfaces* EVERPLAY INSTALLATION INC.

### Protective Surfacing and the CSA Standard for Children's Playspaces & Equipment

Designers, owners, operators and maintainers will have a new CSA Standard Z614, Children's Playspaces and Equipment delivered to them in the spring of 1998. This document will have a significant and expanded effect and responsibility upon everyone involved with the playspace. It is the intention of this article to provide some insight as to the changes that have taken place and the ramifications of these changes.

First important change is that the document is a standard and the words guideline or voluntary do not appear anywhere. As well the wording has been strengthened to make the technical aspects of the standard mandatory. In addition where the previous version was very specific on play structures, protective surfacing and its maintenance have now been placed within the standard. The protection of children from entanglements or cords and toggles has been provided for as well as the provision of a channeling device to the sliding section of all slides to prevent lateral falls from slides.

During the development of this standard there has been significant effort made to harmonize with the standard for play structures in the United States, ASTM F1487. Although there are many similarities, the Canadian Standard can take pride in the fact that where divergence exists, it has been for the advancement of play and protection of the users. One of these is the provision in the Standard for climbing nets and their derivatives, while the other is the inclusion of a test for the entanglement of cords and toggles as well as the requirement that all protective surfacing must be maintained to the performance requirements of the ASTM F1292 from specific fall heights for each play apparatus.

As progress has been made in the development of the Standard, there have been other efforts made to compliment the Standard with the provision of the video, produced by the Ontario Parks Association (OPA), to assist users and stakeholders to inspect and maintain playgrounds to the Standard. In addition, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) has established a program to train and certify inspectors for the playspace and equipment.

### Surfacing and the Playspace

Numerous studies have indicated that 60-70% of all playground injuries requiring medical attention are as a result of a fall to the surface under the playground equipment or an intermediate platform. Nearly half of these injuries are head injuries.

The issue of risk management, liability and the risk exposure of the designer, manufacturer, contractor, owner, operator or maintainer of any play space has become a significant problem. The CSA Standard requires that all playground surfaces be subject to the test procedure outlined in the ASTM F1292 Standard. In addition there is the requirement that since all surfacing is dynamic and constantly changing, that each protective surface be maintained to the requirements of ASTM F1292 standard. The CSA Standard stipulates that the fall height be measured from the highest reasonably accessible point of the structure. As a result structures like a roof are not considered accessible for this purpose. For this purpose the Standard stipulates the location from which the fall height is to be measured as a minimum. Failure to install and maintain the surface will attract risk and liability for negligence.