



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
June 9, 2010

For More Information, Contact:  
Diana Read  
Division of Injury Prevention and Control  
North Dakota Department of Health  
Phone: 701.328.4537  
E-mail: [dread@nd.gov](mailto:dread@nd.gov)

### **State Health Department Offers Tips for Safer Playgrounds**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health encourages people to look for and eliminate potential dangers from home playground equipment that could lead to serious injuries and even death this summer.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), more than 200,000 children are treated in the nation's hospital emergency rooms for playground equipment-related injuries each year. Most of these injuries involve children falling from equipment onto the ground. Other ways children are injured on the playground include impact with moving and nonmoving equipment and contact with hardware that pinches, has gaps or has sharp edges.

“Because we know the majority of playground injuries are caused by falls, we can help prevent or reduce injuries by providing a safer landing surface,” said Diana Read, Injury/Violence Prevention Program director for the North Dakota Department of Health. “By simply installing a shock-absorbing surface around the play equipment, we can minimize, reduce and eliminate some of the fall-related injuries. Grass, turf, asphalt and concrete are not recommended surfaces for playground equipment because they have poor shock-absorbing properties.”

The Department of Health and the CPSC recommend the following safety checklist for public and home playground environments:

- Install and maintain a shock-absorbing surface such as wood chips, shredded rubber, mulch, sand or pea gravel around the play equipment at least 9 inches deep. Another option is to use surfacing mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
- Install protective surfacing at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment.
- Never attach – or allow children to attach – ropes, jump ropes, clotheslines or pet leashes to play equipment; children can strangle on these.

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- Check for hardware that can be hazardous, like open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.
- Check for spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs; these spaces should measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
- Make sure platforms and ramps have guardrails to prevent falls.
- Check for sharp points or edges on equipment.
- Remove tripping hazards like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps and rocks.
- Regularly check play equipment and surfacing to make sure both are in good condition
- Carefully supervise children on play equipment to make sure they are safe.

For more information about playground safety, contact Diana Read, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4537 or visit the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

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