

INDEX 

Health and Safety Executive		Sector Information Minute	
Commercial and Consumer Services, Transportation and Utilities Sector (CACTUS)		SIM 05/2004/12	
Cancellation Date	28/06/2008	Open Government Status	Fully Open
Version No & Date	2: 20/10/2004	Author Unit/Section	Entertainment Section

Target Audience

HSE Inspectors with responsibility for Children's Playgrounds

EUROPEAN STANDARDS FOR OUTDOOR PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

This SIM provides information on the current European Standards for outdoor playground equipment and highlights the need to avoid the unnecessary replacement of existing equipment that is safe although not in compliance with the latest standards. The attached information document can be made available to interested parties outside HSE.

BACKGROUND

1. The current European standards for outdoor playground equipment continue to give rise to questions, particularly on their application to older equipment. Clarification is provided on this as well as the need for children to be able to experience a controlled level of risk.

INFORMATION

2. The attached Information Document ([Appendix](#)) provides background information about this subject and provides advice to play providers and parents. The Information Document may be made available to interested parties.

ACTION BY INSPECTORS

3. Play providers and users should be assured that there is no need to remove existing items of equipment simply because they do not meet the latest standards. An item of play equipment that deviates from the current standard is not necessarily hazardous and the need for remedial action should be based on the advice of a competent person and a risk assessment.

FURTHER INFORMATION

4. Further information can be obtained from the Entertainment Section, CACTUS, Glasgow Office. Tel: (VPN) 521-3012.

Date First Issued: 28 June 2004

Appendix 1

HSE Information Document

European Standards for outdoor playground equipment

Introduction

This information sheet has been prepared for owners and operators of children's playgrounds as well as manufacturers, designers, importers and suppliers of children's playground equipment in order to help them comply with health and safety legislation, principally the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. It gives guidance on the current applicable standards and on the implications for both existing and new installations.

Buying New Equipment

Before 1 January 1999, most children's playground equipment was supplied either to BS5696, to the German equivalent standard DIN7926, or to other national standards. European standard EN1176 *Playground equipment* replaced BS5696 in 1998. EN1177 *Impact absorbing playground surfacing - safety requirements and test methods* has replaced much of BS7188. You should use these two standards together. Parts of the amended standard BS7188 *Methods of test for impact absorbing playground surfaces* remain to provide additional guidance on surfacing. EN1176 (published in seven parts) and EN1177 are available from the British Standards Institution.

Play providers or others ordering new equipment should specify that it should be supplied, installed and maintained in accordance with EN1176.

EN1176 is the appropriate standard for all publicly accessible playground equipment including that provided in parks, schools and communal premises such as shopping areas and public houses. It does not apply to equipment in domestic premises such as back gardens for which EN71 is applicable or to fairground equipment.

Compliance with legal requirements

Note: You should therefore not rely on compliance with EN1176, EN1177 and BS 7188 alone to determine equipment safety.

All British Standards now include the statement 'Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations'. This statement arose following the consumer protection case of *Balding v Lew Ways Ltd*¹ which established that a defendant had to show that they had taken all steps to avoid falling below the standard required by the Toy (Safety) Regulations 1989. Complying with a relevant standard was not enough.

You should monitor accident trends and the condition of the equipment to see if any other measures are necessary. Sometimes you may need to do something more; for example, you may need to make some modifications or replace certain items; the playground's location may attract particular types of children, such as those who are disabled or highly active, in which case more frequent maintenance may be required because damage might occur more often and the consequences of using damaged equipment might be more serious. You will find it necessary to look at the site's accident history when deciding on additional safety precautions.

Existing Equipment

NB A deviation from the standards does not necessarily constitute a hazardous condition and therefore the necessity for retrofit actions should be considered on the basis of a risk

assessment, which is required in any event as one of your duties under health and safety legislation.

Maintenance

Particular attention should be paid to the maintenance of equipment.

Specific guidance is given on the type and frequency of playground inspections within part 7 of EN1176. These 'frequent', 'operational' and 'annual' inspections when implemented by competent persons, as part of an overall safety management system, will assist playground operators with their responsibilities. Operators may need to consider training for their staff to fully implement this. The annual and operational inspection reports should be used to prioritise any remedial work. It is good practice for annual inspections to be undertaken by someone other than the operator. The Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) has further information on inspection and a list of registered inspectors that have demonstrated their competence by examination (see [further information](#)).

Risk and challenge in playgrounds

Risk taking is an essential part of play provision. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment. Equipment designed to the current standards and properly maintained should generally provide the desired risk and challenge whilst ensuring freedom from unacceptable risk of life threatening or permanently disabling injury. More information on this can be found in "Managing risk in play provision: A Position Statement".

This approach is endorsed by the members of the Play Safety Forum (National Playing Fields Association, HSE, RoSPA, Association of Play Industries, Local Government Association, PLAYLINK, Child Accident Prevention Trust, Children's Play Council, Institute of Sport and Recreation Management, Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, Kidsactive, National Early Years Network, National Family and Parenting Institute, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Playlink

References

¹ Balding v Lew Ways Ltd, Queen's Bench Law Reports March 1995 154 (only available from libraries attached to law schools).

Further reading and information

Managing Risk in Play Provision: A Position Statement, Play Safety Forum, 2002, available from the Play Safety Forum, National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakely Street, London, EC1V 7QE

A guide to the new European playground equipment and surfacing standards 1998 available from RoSPA Playground Services The Old Village Hall, Kingston Lisle Business Centre, Wantage, Oxon, OX12 9QX.

Assessing Risk on Children's Playgrounds – RoSPA (as above)

Playground Management and Safety, NPFA 2001, ISBN 0-946085-37-4.

[National Playing Fields Association Inspection Services](#), eye2 IS, 62-65 Chandos Place, Covent Garden, London, WC2N 4LP 020 7812 6149

Register of playground inspectors –

[The Register of Play Inspectors International Ltd.](#)

Federation House, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2RF

The future availability and accuracy of the references listed in this document cannot be guaranteed.

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA. Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995.

HSE priced publications are also available from good booksellers. For other enquiries ring HSE's InfoLine Tel: 08701 545500 or write to HSE's Information Centre, Broad Lane, Sheffield S3 7HQ.

[HSE home page](#) on the World Wide Web

British standards are available from: British Standards Institution, 389 Chiswick High Road, London W4 4AL. Tel: 020 8996 9001

This publication may be freely reproduced, except for advertising, endorsement or commercial purposes. The information is current at Please acknowledge the source as HSE.

