

INSPECTIONS

INFORMATION SHEET

There is no law on the number and frequency of inspections. However, should there be a serious injury, in which the Health and Safety Executive were involved, or in which there was civil litigation, then it is almost certain that EN 1176 would be used for guidance. It makes the following recommendations:

Routine Visual Inspections

Enable “the identification of obvious hazards that can result from vandalism, use or weather conditions e.g. ... broken parts or broken bottles”.

Whilst the Standard suggests that playgrounds subject to heavy use or vandalism might need daily inspections, for many play areas with moderate use a weekly inspection may well be sufficient. However, a judgement needs to be made based on the evidence of breakages, vandalism, etc – the more there is the more often you need to inspect.

Operational Inspections

“A more detailed inspection to check the operation and stability of the equipment, especially for any wear, and should be carried out every one to three months”. My experience is that 3 monthly is usually sufficient unless there is particularly heavy use. (Manufacturer’s instructions may suggest more regularly than this where an item might encourage particularly robust use).

This might be described as a “poke and prod inspection” where the inspector uses force and weight to assess whether or not the equipment is in good condition. In other words the equipment has to be clambered over, moved, bounced on, etc.

Annual Main Inspections

Establish “the overall level of safety of equipment, foundations and surfaces” and “any change in the level of safety of the equipment as a result of repairs made, or of added or replaced components”. It should be carried out by a “competent person”.

This inspection usually indicates significant failures to comply with EN 1176. It also acts as a quality control measure against operational inspections. Any significant difference between the 2 reports will indicate a problem which needs to be addressed. Annual reports can assist managers in fulfilling their responsibility for undertaking Risk Assessments.

Post Installation Inspections

These are usually made a condition of contract with the supplier/installer and ensure the playground is fit for use before handover.

Training

CPAS runs training courses for non-specialists who carry out Visual and Operational Inspections. Contact us for further information.