

PLAYGROUND PLANNING, CONSTRUCTION, AND ACCEPTANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

by Patrick Bonnot

When submitting a “request for bids” for a public playground, the following should be taken into consideration.

Bid documents should clearly indicate the desire for a properly designed, constructed, and inspected facility. Anything less could place the city at odds with the contractor (erector), supplier, or both!

PUBLIC PLAYGROUND STANDARDS

It is important to let bidders know that you require playground equipment and facilities to conform to the current standards for public playgrounds. These standards are referred to as the American Society for Testing and Materials Standard 1487 or ASTM 1487-11. In addition, the playground should comply with the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) on public playgrounds publication issue #325, Nov. 2010. Both of these standards are best practices, but not necessarily state or federal law. However, ADA is federal law.

CERTIFICATIONS

The CPSC certification process is completely separate from the ASTM certification. The CPSC certification is unique in that the actual manufacturer or importer of equipment must certify that the equipment conforms to CPSC standards. Due to the fact that some parts of equipment may be imported from overseas, it is important to get a “Children’s Product Certificate” indicating that the whole structure or play equipment complies with CPSC standards.

Another important certification that covers both ASTM and CPSC is the International Playground Manufacturers Association certification (IPEMA). IPEMA provides voluntary, third-party product certification services for public play equipment and public play surfacing materials. IPEMA certification provides the validation sought by consumers regarding manufacturers’ conformance to ASTM

F 1487 and ASTM F 1292 (specification for Impact Attenuation of Surface Systems – playground surfacing under and around playground equipment).

After construction is completed and before the city approves the playground, contracts should require a letter or statement that includes, “as built, the playground complies with ASTM and the CPSC standards for public playgrounds.” These designations are different than the IPEMA certification that refers back to the equipment meeting standards

before installation. The contractor may provide such statement on business letterhead. Ideally, the contractor will use a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) to erect the playground at no additional cost to verify the playgrounds’ post-construction conformance.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON PLAYGROUND CONTRACTS AND CONSTRUCTION

Signage should be installed indicating appropriate age of play.

SAMPLE BID/RFP/CONTRACT WORDING

Play structures shall meet all provisions of both the CPSC *2010 Handbook for Public Playground Safety* and ASTM F1487-11 Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use, and be purchased from IPEMA certified manufacturers. IPEMA certification provides the validation sought by the city regarding manufacturers’ conformance to ASTM F 1487. Evidence of compliance shall be submitted and stamped on equipment as required. All pieces of equipment must comply with the accessibility guidelines under the American with Disabilities Act, including those guidelines as described in “A Guide to the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Play Areas.” Additionally, if an element of the play structure is created by a manufacturer other than the play structure on which it is housed, such as a play panel, the element should have a “Children’s Product Certificate” indicating it conforms to the CPSC rules for public playgrounds.

Additionally, the contractor shall present the city with a letter brought forth on business letterhead stating, “The playground provided to the city of (XYZ) was built with and conforms to all ASTM and CPSC standards relating to public playgrounds. Further, it has been either erected by a CPSI or construction was overseen by a CPSI, or a CPSI has inspected the final product and attests to the conformity to ASTM and CPSC standards relating to public playgrounds.”

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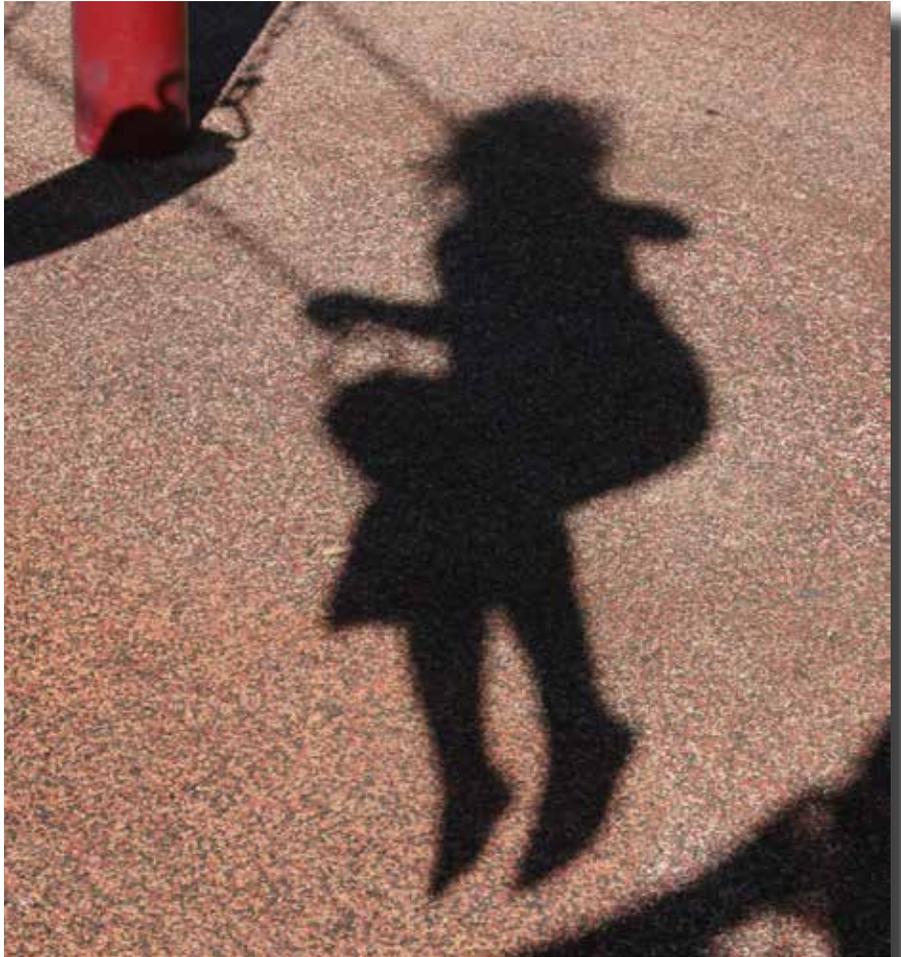
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Signs are usually available from the manufacturer indicating which age group is appropriate for a specific type of playground structure.

If the city is responsible for playground surfacing, standard ASTM 2223 and ASTM 1292 are good guides for keeping patrons safe from falls. Should the city use mulch as a surfacing material, ASTM 2075 is a good reference.

Are your playground components IPEMA certified? Check for certification here: http://www.ipema.org/certified_products_search.cfm?cert=f1487.

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"The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a comprehensive civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. The ADA requires that newly constructed and altered state and local government facilities, places of public accommodation, and commercial facilities be readily accessible to, and usable by, individuals with disabilities. Recreational facilities, including play areas, are among the facilities required to comply with the ADA. The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board - often referred to as the "Access Board" - has developed accessibility guidelines

for newly constructed and altered play areas. The play area guidelines are a supplement to the "Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines" (ADAAG).¹ □

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Footnote:

¹Source: U.S. Access Board Summary of Accessibility Guidelines for Play Areas. Technical assistance on the ADA standards is available from the U.S. Access Board. For guidance on the Department of Justice's ADA regulations or use of standards, visit www.ada.gov. The Great Plains ADA center in Columbia, Missouri is also a very good resource: <http://www.gpadacenter.org/>