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Hazelwood Fire Activities

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The Hazelwood Fire Department would like to make you aware of this new Consumer Product Safety Commission study on playground death and injury statistics. The report that follows is reprinted from the CPSC with their permission.

Make Backyard Playgrounds Safer

WASHINGTON, D.C - A new report shows that over a ten-year period, more deaths to children occurred on backyard playgrounds than on public playgrounds. Over a ten-year period, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has reports of nearly 150 deaths to children under the age of 15 involving playground equipment; at least 90 of these occurred in a home setting. Almost three-fourths of the deaths in home locations resulted from hangings from ropes, cords, homemade rope swings, and other similar items. New safety standards, aimed at reducing the risk of strangulation, require that ropes be secured at both ends and that makers of home equipment warn against attaching additional ropes.

Playground equipment is also a leading cause of injuries to children. Back in 1999, it is estimated that there were more than 200,000 playground-equipment injuries, with almost 47,000 injuries on home playgrounds to children under age 15. The proportion of pre-school children (younger than age 5) injured on playground equipment was higher on home playgrounds than on playgrounds in general. Almost 40 percent of those injured at home were younger than 5 years, as compared with about 27 percent on other playgrounds.

"Children should be out on the playground where they belong, not in the hospital emergency room," said CPSC Chairman Ann Brown. "We believe that by sharing our simple safety tips with parents, home playgrounds can be a place where kids have fun and play safely."

Parents are encouraged to install and maintain protective surfacing, eliminate unsafe ropes and check for potentially hazardous hooks and edges on swings and slides on home playgrounds.

CPSC's study found that only 9 percent of home playgrounds had protective, shock-absorbing surfacing. Dirt and grass, which are the most prevalent surfaces under home playground equipment, do not adequately protect children from serious head injuries.

To help prevent injuries from falls and other hazards on home playgrounds, the following safety tips are recommended:

- * Install and maintain at least 9 inches of wood chips, mulch, or shredded rubber for play equipment up to 7 feet high. If sand or pea gravel is used, install at least a 9-inch layer for play equipment up to 5 feet high. Or, use surfacing mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.

- * Install protective surfacing at least six feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, the surface should extend, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
- * Never attach ropes, jump ropes, clotheslines, or pet leashes to the equipment. This can present a serious strangulation hazard to children.
- * Smooth out sharp points or edges, and cover open "S" hooks or protruding bolts.
- * Check for openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs. Spaces should be either less than 3 1/2 inches or more than 9 inches so that they don't present an entrapment hazard.
- * Always supervise young children to make sure they are safe.

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