OSBIE Risk Management Advisory

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*Focus on ...*

.....Safety programs should include the CSA Z614-98 standard as a MINIMUM requirement;

.....Winter conditions can make playground equipment unsafe, even though it may comply with the CSA Standard;

.....School playground equipment should be "off limits" during winter conditions.

# P-4

## Playground Safety - Winter Use Advisory

OSBIE has been a long-time advocate of playground safety programs that include, but are not limited to, the provisions of the CSA Standard CSA-Z614-98, and any preceding Guidelines.

Without detracting from the importance of following the CSA Standards for Playground Safety, we wish to emphasize that this Standard is intended to establish a MINIMUM code of conduct for any operator of public-use play structures.

One area of concern which falls outside the provisions of the CSA Standard, relates to equipment safety under winter conditions. The following winter conditions can make equipment, that is otherwise in compliance with the Standard, unsafe for use:

1. Freezing temperatures - At temperatures below 0 C, very few types of protective ground surfacing remain resilient enough to offer any degree of protection to a falling child - regardless of depth. If the ground cover is frozen, the play equipment is NOT safe for use.
2. Snow build-up - Snow can cause two problems on a play structure - firstly, it can make play surfaces very slippery; secondly, it can create suffocation hazards if the openings at the end of tube slides or similar structures become closed in by drifting snow.
3. Ice or freezing rain - As noted above, ice or freezing rain can make play surfaces, hand grips and stairways very slippery, increasing the risk of slip and fall injuries.
4. Clothing - Winter clothing is much different than normal clothing. Synthetic materials, such as nylon, reduce sliding resistance, particularly on plastic slide beds. This can increase the travel speed on this equipment to a dangerous level, and if combined with frozen ground cover, as described under Item (1), can increase the chance of injury.

   Winter clothing is also very bulky and is more likely to have drawstrings or hooks and clips which can become entangled in components of the equipment.

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### *Recommendation:*

It is OSBIE's position that playground equipment cannot be operated safely under the winter conditions as described above, and that schools should place this equipment "off limits" during these conditions.

E. & O.E

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