



**THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON**  
**Saint John Bosco Catholic Church**

**OFFICE OF RISK MANAGEMENT**  
**Playground Safety Inspection**  
**May 8, 2017**

The following information highlights areas of concern. This is a CONFIDENTIAL INTERNAL REPORT.

**BACKGROUND**

The playground inspection was conducted on **April 28, 2017**. The playground has recently been modified, with play features being relocated and the perimeter fencing moved closer to the play structure. There are several components that do not comply with current safety standards. Several other components are in a state of disrepair, and making proper repairs may be challenging. Some components would need to be replaced or removed. It is difficult to determine the integrity of the aged wood and fasteners. The cracked and splintered railings, barriers and walking surfaces would also need addressed.

In addition, the playground structure is at least 17 years old, which is a concern because Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA), a chemical comprised of arsenic, chromium, and copper, was commonly used in treating wood for playground structures until 2004. There is a possibility that the wood used in the playground contains CCA. Although the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has not mandated the removal of playground structures made with CCA-treated wood, concerns have been raised about possible health effects of exposure to chemical residues, particularly arsenic, from contact with the wood and surrounding soil.

It is our responsibility to provide safe playgrounds, and to minimize the likelihood and severity of any potential injuries. Although it would be possible to address the safety concerns present on this playground, it is my opinion it would not be worth the effort. A better and more economical option might be to replace the existing equipment with new equipment in a configuration that meets current safety norms.

The following information is based on requirements/guidelines contained in the 2015 U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) document, *Public Playground Safety Handbook*, available at <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/325.pdf> .



## PLAYGROUND BASICS

Playground use requires constant supervision to minimize accidents and ensure the children are using the playground area in a safe manner. Those providing supervision over the children are expected to survey the equipment prior to the first use of the day.

The supplier of the surfacing material must provide documentation that the material meets the specifications for the maximum fall height potential. They must comply with the ASTM 1292 Standard.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**17-04-01** Support/Structure - Post. The stability of at least one side of the swing support post is weak. Remove or replace weak posts. Replace the lag bolts with approved continuous fasteners that are long enough to fasten both posts and the center beam.



*Images of unstable support beam*

**17-04-02** Use Zone - Inadequate. The swing for older children was removed immediately because of the weak post and lack of adequate use zone (i.e., the 8-foot high beam on the swings requires 16 feet of front and back clearance). Remove the swing beam or use only for infant swings. The slide is also an issue. Since the fence is within the safe use zone of the slide (see pictures), either the fence must be moved or the slide removed.



*Images of improper use zone*

17-04-03

Crush/Shear - Bridge. The bridge slat spacing allows for potential pinching or crushing injuries. Use spacers to prevent slats from causing a crush injury or tighten slats to prevent access to pinch points.



*Images of loose crush and pinch hazard*

17-04-04

Slide – Transition. The entry to the slide should be designed to guide children to a seated position. The slide bed way should be flush with the platform to minimize trip potential.



*Images of trip transition*

17-04-05

Attachment – Anchor Points. The chain climber has multiple attachment points that are not connected. One is connected with only a string. Remove climber or attach all attachment points properly.



*Images of improper anchor attachments*

**17-04-06** Protrusion - Fasteners. Many fasteners have come loose and are protruding from the playground equipment. Secure all fasteners to be flush with the surface.



*Images of loose fasteners and protrusions*

**17-04-07** Surface - Splintered. Rails, platforms, posts and barriers are cracked and splintered. Repair finish to a smooth continuous condition.



*Images of loose fasteners and protrusions*

**17-04-08** Signage. Signs are required to indicate the age of the intended user and the warnings listed below in red. Preferred signage should state the following:

- Name of school/church or facility and hours of operation – (ex: Closed at sunset)
- Adult supervision required
- **Indicating age of intended user** (playground designed for children age x to x)
- **Warning** - communicating the removal of helmets, drawstrings or accessories around the neck which are all known to create head entrapment or entanglement hazards.
- **Warning** - hot play surfaces ( when applicable)
- Play at your own risk
- Any site specific rules, warnings or cautions. (One person on ladder, no pushing etc.)

**17-04-09** Possible Presence of CCA-Treated Wood. As noted above, while the EPA has not required the removal of playground structures made with CCA-treated wood, concerns have been raised about potential human health effects. These concerns relate primarily to the possibility of exposure to arsenic residue on children's hands, followed by hand-to-mouth contact. This risk can be reduced by the application of surface coatings (e.g., stains or sealants) to CCA-treated wood to reduce a child's potential exposure to arsenic from the wood surface. CPSC data and EPA studies suggest that regular (at least once a year) use of an oil- or water-based, penetrating sealant or stain can reduce arsenic migration from CCA-treated wood. For more information on this topic, see the following resources:

- <https://www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122137/270.pdf>
- <https://www.cpsc.gov/newsroom/news-releases/2004/cpsc-denies-petition-to-ban-cca-pressure-treated-wood-playground-equipment-/>

**BACKGROUND DATA - PLAYGROUND INJURIES IN THE DIOCESE**

The following chart identifies 783 playground injuries reported by all diocesan schools between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2016.

**Playground Injuries – All Schools**

<b>Fall from monkey/raised bars</b>	160
Fall while running	122
Slipped/tripped	90
Collided with another student	89
Hurt by ball	54
<b>Fall from platform/beam</b>	51
<b>Slide, fell off or caught in</b>	46
<b>Fell while climbing</b>	34
Injured by swing equipment	24
Landed wrong after jumping	24
Struck by or against an object	20
Fell playing tag	15
Horseplay	12
Fence/gate caused injury	11
hurt by thrown/swinging object	9
<b>Zip line, fell off</b>	9
Tackled by student	7
Other, incl. sharp object	6

783

Proper and constant supervision, along with proper ground surface (material and maintenance), can reduce the occurrence and severity of injuries.

Continually monitor the condition of the play area, including adequate ground cover and tightness of bolts and moving parts.

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The Office of Risk Management is still offering to advance funding for the improvement of playgrounds and other play areas. Please contact our office if you would like more information.

In order to improve safety and reduce future losses, please respond back to the Office of Risk Management within **90 days** of receiving this report to explain any and all modifications made based on the recommendations. If you would like more information on the report findings, please contact Jeff Vallimont [j.vallimont@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:j.vallimont@arlingtondiocese.org) or 703-841-2580.

*The information contained in this report was obtained from sources, which to the best of the writer's knowledge are authentic and reliable. The Catholic Diocese of Arlington makes no guarantee of results, and assumes no liability in connection with either the information herein contained, or the safety suggestions herein made. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that every acceptable safety procedure is contained herein, or that abnormal or unusual circumstances may not warrant or require further or additional procedures.*