

Aquatic and Playground Slides

In the past several years, many facilities have installed playground and aquatic slides that are exceptionally high and long. Most are made of plastic tubes and are professionally constructed, but some are made of canvas and other materials. When injuries occur on these slides, they often occur at two locations: the access point and the exit.

The access point for most of these slides is a ladder. You can reduce the number of falls by installing handrails, and reduce the severity of fall injuries by placing a rubber pad at the base of the ladder. A safer, but somewhat more expensive method of accessing the slide is to build steps with handrails and a platform. Youth recreation programs also need to have a way to prevent access to the top of the slide when it is not being supervised.

The exit point is the location of most of the more severe injuries. Frequently, injuries are the result of one participant colliding with another before the first participant has exited the slide. Another cause is the slope of the slide's exit ramp; a steep slope directs the participant downward, resulting in a forceful impact. Slides should have an exit ramp that is horizontal to the ground or water. For a playground slide, a rubber mat on the ground helps reduce the impact and provides a level surface for the participant to exit. For aquatic slides, consider using float ropes to create a zone that must be clear before the next participant enters the slide.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.