

Protect Kids from Falls Inside, Too

One commonly overlooked hazard is inadequate fall protection for indoor play equipment. Many facilities provide adequate fall protection surfaces for outdoor play equipment, but have little or no protection for indoor play equipment. **Indoor carpet is insufficient fall protection.**

Voluntary standards that govern indoor play equipment are the same as those that govern outdoor play equipment. For example, play equipment that children use while standing or seated at ground level is not required to follow the recommendations for resilient fall protection surfacing. The Consumer Product Safety Commission defines this type of play equipment as sand boxes, playhouses, or any other equipment that does not have an elevated designated playing surface.

Indoor play equipment that has an elevated platform, like tot slides and other structures, should have some form of fall protective surfacing. Unitary materials, such as rubber mats, provide a very effective protective surface for indoor use. Mats must have a nonskid backing or be anchored to prevent them from skidding out of place. Also, make sure mats are securely bound together to prevent gaps, which could present a tripping hazard.

The ideal indoor play area is a room full of mats. If this isn't practical, place protective mats at the bottom of stairs and slide exit areas. Also place mats along any play platforms that do not have rails, such as some self-contained play structures.

Allow ample space between indoor play equipment and structures so children don't run into each other while playing. Close-proximity supervision during indoor play is crucial—staff members must be close enough to children to react immediately to any potential emergency.