

The Other Playground Inspections

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You have had your playground inspected and approved by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector but now you have received a letter from the Manufacturer of the equipment who says the equipment is not installed properly and your warrantee will be invalid if it is not corrected. What went wrong? Didn't the CPSI inspect the play equipment properly?

In California, all playgrounds are required to be inspected and approved by a Certified Playground Safety inspector before they can be opened to the public so many agencies are considering the Playground Safety Inspection to be the equivalent of a final construction inspection and many small entities that don't have construction inspectors are relying on the Certified Playground Safety Inspection as the only inspection..

When you take the CPSI course you learn about doing the Playground Safety Audit, Low frequency inspections and high frequency inspections but little is said of other important inspections that may desired or required.

The CPSI knows that all slides must have a devise to make the children sit down before they use the slide so all the CPSI is interested in is does the equipment have such a devise. Manufacturer may have several options including a top rail or a slide hood. The Manufacturer may have specific ways that each item is installed and if it is not installed correctly, it can fail. I was asked to evaluate a turning bar because it broke while a 6 year old girl was using it. It turned out that the Manufacturer required that the clamps have a lock pin installed in a very specific way that the contractor did not follow. The CPSI who inspected the play area did not know this so he approved the installation. The Turn Bar passed the Certified Playground Safety Inspection but failed the requirement to be installed as per manufacturers Installation Instructions.

The owner of the project may have specified that all slides must have a hood but the designer may have done cost engineering and chose to use a top rail in place of the hood. If the CPSI did not know this he would approve the top rail because it was compliant and the Manufacturer would be happy if the top rail was installed according to Manufacturers instruction but the owner would probably be very upset because he did not get what he thought he was paying for.

The play equipment can be installed in compliance with the Playground Safety requirements and the Manufacturers installation instructions but rotated 90 degrees from the design layout approved by the owner or be the wrong color combination.

The plans and the installation must be reviewed and approved by the owner and the designer. The installation must be inspected and approved by the Manufacturer's representative to verify that it was installed as per the Manufacture's Installation instructions and there can be several other approvals needed. I had one case where the play equipment was installed under high voltage power lines. The utility company required that all of the equipment be grounded in case one of the power lines fell across

the play structure. They required that the equipment be inspected and approved by a utility inspector before the project could be used. In cold climates some communities require that the footings be installed deeper than the frost line to prevent the equipment from being pushed out of the ground by the expansion and contraction of the ground.

The point is that the Certified Playground Safety Audit is only part of the process not the final approval. The average CPSI is not familiar with all of the requirements imposed on play equipment so the owner needs to be aware of all inspections that may be required for their playground project and assure that all appropriate inspections are conducted.