ENTRAPMENT

AS 4685 (2004) Playground Equipment, describes entrapment as a hazard in which a body or part of the body, or clothing can become trapped. The user is not able to break free and injury is caused by the entrapment.

Entrapment may occur via:
- whole body entrapment;
- head and neck entrapment;
- finger entrapment;
- foot and limb entrapment; and
- clothing entrapment

It is important that when setting up flexible play structures, staff are always aware of potential entrapments.

Over recent years play equipment has become increasingly complex and entrapment has become a key issue in the incidence of injury to children in outdoor play spaces. Angles on the play equipment in areas where children move, such as down a slide, can provide opportunities to wedge clothing and body parts. Entrapment of clothing can cause injury if it brings the child to an unexpected or abrupt stop. Gaps on sliding surfaces and protrusions on equipment can ensnare clothing cords and toggles, including hat toggles.

The Australian Standards require that equipment be constructed in such a manner as to minimise the risk of entrapment. There is also a need to understand potential entrapment when setting up flexible play structures.

Some entrapment measurements are as follows:
- chains minimum opening greater than 8.6mm.
- finger 8mm-25mm (above 1200mm, or in forced movement* applications)
- foot greater than 30mm (in the direction of travel on surfaces intended for walking/running inclined up to 45 degrees)
- neck 45mm-155mm (partially bound openings including V-shaped openings where the lower edge is above 600mm)
- head/torso 89mm-230mm (fully bound openings where the lower edge is above 600mm)

This means that gaps/holes of the above measurements should not exist within the play space.

*Forced movement is where the child’s movement is dictated by the operation or function of the equipment. This includes equipment such as swings, slides, spring rockers, flying foxes, fire poles and carousels.

If you are concerned about entrapment issues, contact Play Australia for a discussion and advice.

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