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Playground Consulting and 3rd Party Inspection
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Since 1986.

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Playground Installation heights.

I have inspected over 5000 playgrounds and installed height and surfacing were the most prevalent problems I found.

Why is it important for customers or tender preparers to make sure installation heights are specified?

CSA is quite specific for many items re permissible heights, exits for slides over 1.2 m are to be between 175 to 380 mm. Monkey bars are to be a maximum of 2.1 m for children ages 5 to 12. This is just two examples.

If the play structure is installed over dynamic surfacing, sand, peastone or wood fibre then over time the surface moves and if the playground components were installed at the maximum very quickly they would not pass CSA due to the height changing.

Why are the play structures installed many times at the maximum? if the installation is an in-ground concrete it is easier for the installer to dig a smaller hole, if it is a frame it is easier to build up or just level the ground.

The wrong height is now a CSA non-compliance issue but also a cost issue as we now have to install more surfacing and not only that but monitor it more. Plus, many times, you can not install enough surfacing to bring the unit to the minimum level due to the lack of surround height due to the installer installing the unit higher.

Now you are into a problem of more servicing, if the unit was installed at the minimum then you would have many years before the unit reaches the maximum allowed and needing to fix the surface plus the units would be in compliance more often.

This problem can occur on rubber surfacing if there was not proper sub base work done and once you have a height problem with rubber it is a big expense.

I would advise customers and tender preparers to specify minimum CSA heights on all purchases and tenders. There is no extra cost to you but a big savings in the years to come and you will be in CSA compliance more often.

Tony Kelly, CCPI
Playground Inspector and Surface Tester.