



BigToys – Rocks & Ropes

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Playground Review - 4 pages written/2 pages pictures

Winn Brook School – Belmont, MA (next door park)

Completed: October 21, 2011

John LaRue – CPSI - #8336-1112 (expires November, 2012)

The following report is accompanied by a group of photographs identified with a DSCO number as a reference. We are attaching this report and a Thumbnail Print Sheet electronically – and will place both originals in US Mail. If you would like to receive digital copies of all individual pictures please notify and we can do a bulk email via YOUSENDIT.

You may reference the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Guidelines for public playgrounds – available at no charge on our resource web site – www.playgroundregs.com.

The Leather's Playground Company is from Ithaca, NY – To my knowledge this is a non-engineered/non uniform play apparatus. With non manufactured equipment, there is no product liability insurance – and constancy with cutting of wood and securing with nails, screws, etc is difficult to control Items in the US/CPSC change as the Handbook is updated – and manufacturers are dutiful in issuing any recall or alert notices. A suggestion is to contact this Designer– give them the name/address of the school/park and ask if anything on their playground climber has ever been issued a recall or consumer alert – and to their knowledge – did the design meet the US/CPSC guidelines at the time of construction (this is important for risk management).

In order to conduct a comprehensive – board to board review and analysis on a home-built, non-uniform playground – especially adding an age-factor – is unrealistic – simply impossible to test structural soundness of possibly non uniform wood, possibly non uniform hardware and possibly non uniform labor used to install.

Wood – bulk of wood is typical pressure treated lumber (suspect high in CCA) – however – two points:

- Repair work has used a Trex/Trex-like material (good)
- Wood has been sealed with a sealant/surface coating – appears to be a Deck and Shake or an EPL sealant – both excellent for sealing wood (would provide compliance for EPA recommendations)

- Structure is old/antiquated – but ongoing repair work and treatment of wood seems consistent

Surfacing: material is an engineered wood fiber.

- This should be maintained to a 9" - 12" depth –
- March, 2012 – ADA regulations for play areas become enforceable – engineered wood fiber meets that regulation

ADA statement - play surface does meet and existing equipment does not meet current ADA regulations – new/altered play apparatus must be made compliant by the mandatory March 2012 date. Access to the play area is not met.

Pics 980, 981 and 981

- Torso Probes pass thru both of the vertical access pipe rails – causing entrapment

Pic 983 and 985 – slide

- oriented N/NE (minimum sun impact) – slide measures 17" to surfacing – should be in the 7" – 15" range – this is just due to surface compaction
- Slide safety rails measure 3.5" – these should be a 4" minimum

Pic 984 – slide pole

- measures 14" to the platform – should be +/- 20". This is too close to the platform for a free slide.

Pics 986 – 986 – dual connecting bridge

- discovered nine torso entrapments on one side – and 8 torso entrapments on opposite side (pic 998)

Pic 990 - 992 – two additional torso entrapments

Pics 993 – 995 – broken wood with exposed screw – exposed nail head. The action here is to weekly inspect all hardware and have it reset – nails do not have much longevity – and those nails that have burrs to keep them solid – disintegrate over time due to chemicals in wood (which is why these pop out frequently)

Pic 996 – there is a 12" "balance beam" or connector leading from one climber to a 2nd....this is broken

Pic 997 – Chain Balance Beam – chains are rusted, cutting thru the logs and there is a crush point where log moves and strikes surfacing.

Pic 999 – Overhead Ladder. Overhead Ladder to surfacing measures 86" – max should be 84" – site just needs couple inches of surfacing. Overhead Ladder has an entrapment – torso gauges passes – head gauge does not.

Spiral Slide Deck – photo did not print. The heights of the wood barriers measure 34” – these should all be minimum of 38” to prevent kids from falling over (center of gravity is 38”)

Pic 1000 and 1001 – Tires

- I suspect this activity has been removed/modified

Pics 1002 and 1003 – Spiral Slide

- The gaps have all been filled in and maintain nicely with a caulking material

Pic 1004 and 1005 – Overhead Pipe Rail

- Missing the lower activity – chain walk??
- Surfacing measures 81” to surfacing (max allowable is 84”) – so this is compliant
- On the Outboard side of this activity – there are two entrapment locations

Pic 1008 – Rings

- The rings that are at both end of the traverse are hung over directly onto the deck – they should be directly under safety surfacing so when a child falls straight down – there are no obstacles

Pics 1011, 1012 , 1013 and 1014 – 2nd set of overhead rings

- This Traverse is located over a hard surface
- Unit is missing one rung
- Chains rusted – one rung is not attached and slips off (1014)

Pic 1015 – missing activity

- Kids at playground reported this was a belt bridge

Pics 1009, 1010, 1016, 1017, 1018, 1019 and 1020 – Main Swing Unit

- Trim tree branch to be greater than 6’ from over head bar/side of unit
- There are numerous entanglement and protrusions on this swing (1017)
- Swings seats are worn, one is split, all bushing/swingers are broken
 - You can always contact American Swing Company at 800.433.2573 for generic swing part catalogs
- The swingers are bolted into the overhead wood bar – can not determine if this is a thru bolt system (which is ideal) or if lag bolts (poor) – this should be disassembled and be reviewed.
- Safe set backs – safe zones towards the grass area should be extended 2’ so you maintain 2X height of cross bar

Pics 1021 – Infant seats

- Safe zones front and rear are both fine. Safe zones on each side should measure 6’ (you have zero feet one side and 4’ other)

- Bushings showing wear – but not totally shot – protrusions on bolts
Pics 1022, 1023, 1025 and 1026 – smaller climber next to red sign
- Pics 1022 – entrapment
- Pic 1023 – 3.5” side bed rail (should be 4”)
- Pics 1025 – counted 11 torso entrapments
- 1026 – torso entrapment
- 1027 – this is a broken board – allows for EZ access underneath the structure
- Pic 1028 – back rest is 16” high....this should be at barrier height (38”) as seat is +/- 40” above surfacing

Pics 1029, 1030 and 1031 – Access

- There is no wheelchair access to this playground, from parking lot, that I could find. Pic 1031 shows access to the basketball – but as you wrap around to the parking lot – there are no curb cuts

Miscellaneous surfacing

- Took random readings – in areas where there is minimal foot traffic – surfacing measures +/- 12”
- Under heavy impact areas – surfacing has greatly compacted:
 - 4” deep under 9 ring traverse
 - 6” under Parallel Bars
 - 5” under overhead ladder
 - 7” near smallest metal slide

This playground review does not test structural abilities of connectors, chains, hardware, footings, nails supporting wood, etc – it’s the end-users responsibility to adhere to this designer’s regular maintenance schedule to monitor use/abuse.

Playground has been maintained as evidence of replacement boards – and the removal of some activities – but that is the extent of it

Due to the vast number of entrapments, protrusions, missing hardware – coupled with the fact this type of design lacks product liability insurance – I see no justification why this unit should remain in service. Extreme caution should be maintained and exercised. Entrapment areas should be addressed, hardware, chains and connectors replaced, swing seats/chains/bushing replaced – and surfacing maintained to a 12” depth – a cut should be made in the curb to allow for proper access to play area. This is an antiquated playground.



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