

## Risky Play



# Benefits of risky play and the negative effects of Playground Safety Standards



# DEFINITION OF PLAY

Play has been defined as bringing the world to life to children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and **exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present.** The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives. Through play, humans gain some of their first exposures to risk and this is where they learn how to cope with it at the personal level.

“A child loves his play, not because it's easy, but because it's hard”.

Benjamin Spock (American Pediatrician, 1903-1998)





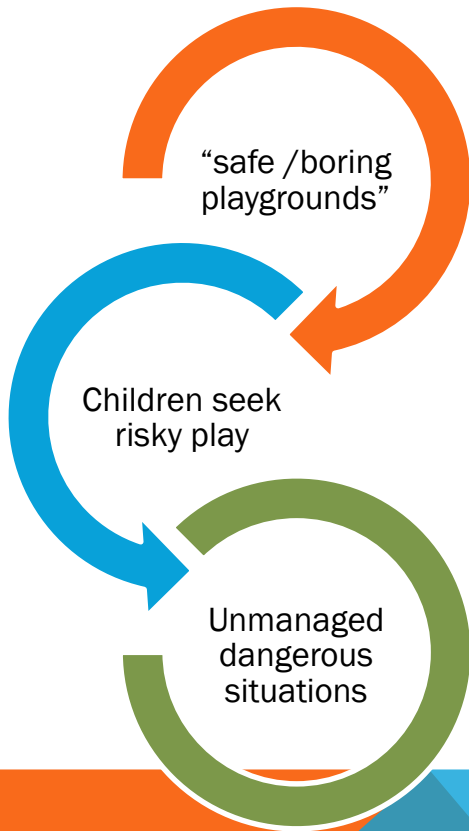
## “bubble-wrap child “

A child that is so overprotected, it's as if they were being wrapped in bubble-wrap to keep them safe and out of harms way. Often these children suffer greatest later in life when they enter the real world and have no experience in making mistakes.

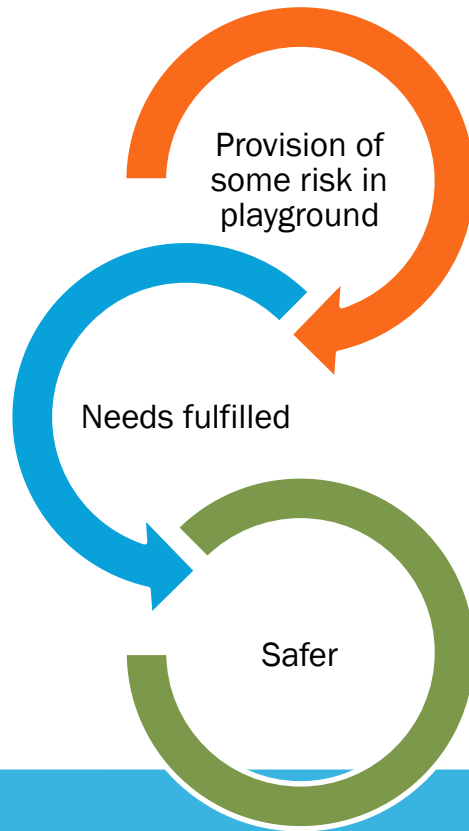


# RISK COMPENSATION

SCENARIO A.



SCENARIO B.



# GLOBAL DEBATE

There is an ongoing **global debate** about prioritizing the safety of children and providing motivating and challenging play opportunities called risky play.



"Climbing trees and falling out of them is all part of growing up and having small injuries helps children learn about risks"

RoSPA

Further information on Play Scotland including our Parents & Families Section and our KidsZone can be found at [www.playscotland.org](http://www.playscotland.org)

You can now follow Play Scotland on Twitter and Facebook  
[www.twitter.com/Playscotland](https://www.twitter.com/Playscotland)  
[www.facebook.com/pages/Play-Scotland/223667477759513](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Play-Scotland/223667477759513)

# RESEARCH BEHIND THE STANDARDIZATION OF PLAYGROUNDS

The standards we have passed onto us in South Africa from the former British and now international playground safety standards, particularly European standards such as EN 1176 and 1177 promulgated by Comité Européen de Normalisation (CEN, 2008a, 2008b).



Although it has many advantages, there are two problems:

- Commercially biased?
- Ignores child development.
- Ignores the needs of children in play

Technical inspectors assisting with risk-benefit assessment must have a sound understanding of play and play values.



# THE TRUE PICTURE...

1. Fatalities are rare
2. Accidents due to items brought to playground
3. Social behaviour
4. Injuries are rarely severe
5. Softer surface do not lower risk
6. Sports are more injury related than playgrounds

Research paper from Prof.  
D.J. Ball : *Playgrounds:  
Risks, benefits and  
choices*

Equipment type	Total cases	Behavioural factors <sup>33</sup>	Fall from a height	Hit equipment or other object	Other cause	Unknown	Cases not relevant	Total of relevant cases
Slides	172	46 (28%)	70 (42)	35 (21)	9 (5)	6 (4)	6	166 (100)
Climbing frames	256	27 (11)	190 (75)	25 (10)	8 (3)	2 (1)	4	252 (100)
Swings	229	95 (43)	106 (48)	4 (2)	14 (6)	-	10	219 (100)
Seesaws	60	15 (25)	10 (17)	25 (42)	9 (15)	-	1	59 (100)
Roundabouts	46	16 (35)	16 (35)	6 (13)	7 (15)	1 (2)	-	46 (100)

Surface	Concrete	Tarmac	Sand	Bark/chip	Grass/earth	Rubber	Other	Unknown	Total
Fracture	7	8	4	33	12	26	2	66	158
No fracture	25	16	2	32	23	27	11	73	209
Unknown	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	4	7
Total	33	24	6	65	35	55	13	143	374



# LOCAL CONTEXT

Locally, our decisions need to be influenced by **security, economy and future sustainability**.

- Traffic, crime, drugs, litter and vandalism..
- Lack of maintenance
- Lack of supervision
- Misuse of funds

It is evident that injuries caused on playground equipment are not high in relation to other dangers that children encounter on their way to the playgrounds.



# TOO MANY RESTRICTIONS:



*“Tires will become heated during summer months. The heat could result in children losing grip resulting in a fall onto an unprotected surface. 4.2.8.2 & 4.2.8.2.4 SANS 51176-1:2010”*



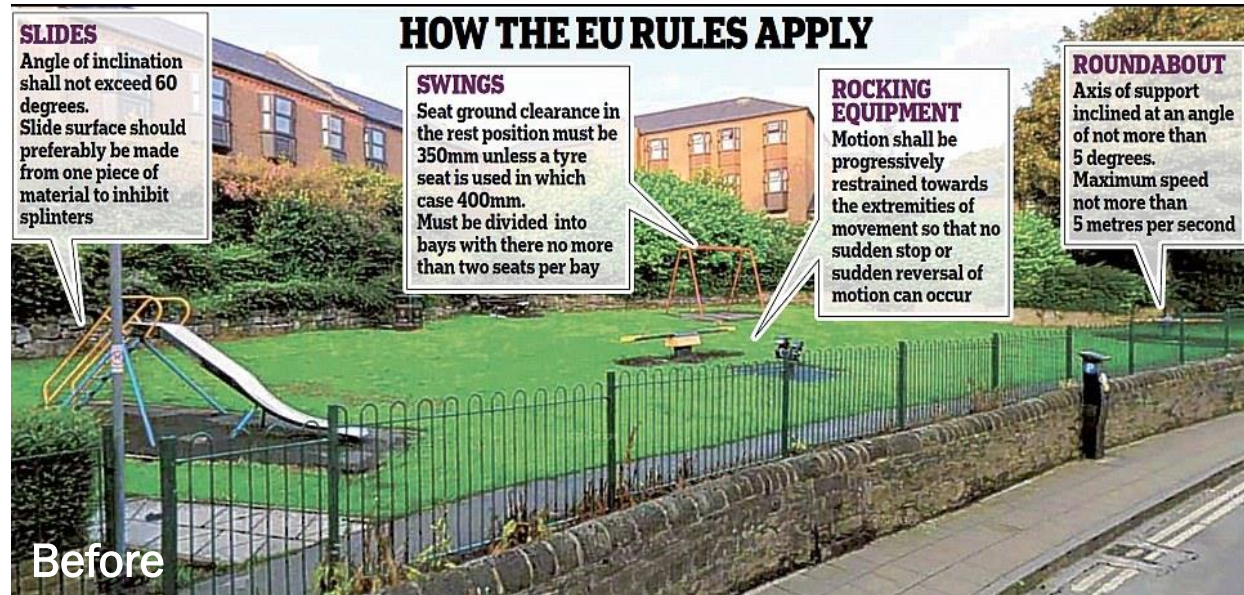
*“Users may not expect the projections seen in this image. 4.2.8.6 SANS 51176-1:2010”*



# WHAT IS LEFT FOR THE CHILDREN TO PLAY ON?

“There is no clear evidence that playground safety measures have lowered the average risk on playgrounds,” said David Ball, a professor of risk management at Middlesex University in London.

“The tightening of an industry standard does not mean that older facilities suddenly and automatically become more dangerous.”



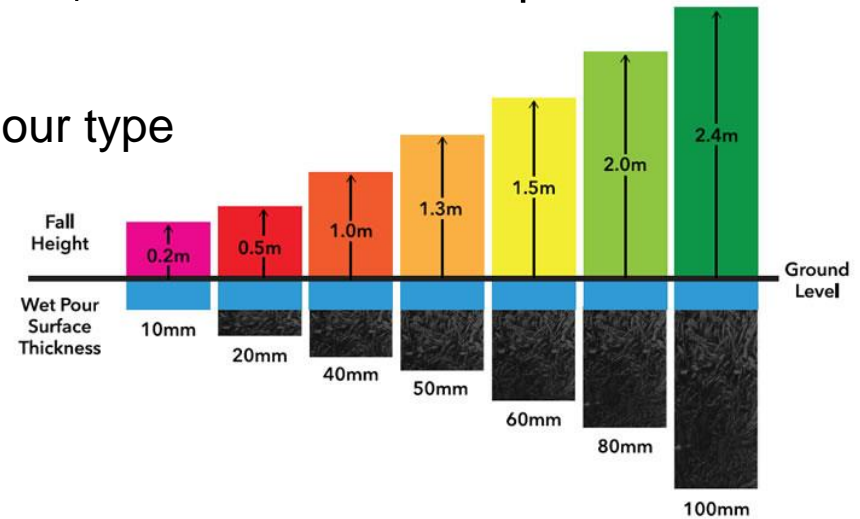


# WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

When resources are scarce and cannot be wasted, does it make sense to spend millions on rubberized surfaces?

R260.00 – R780,00/m<sup>2</sup> depending on colour type

How much would the new surfacing cost to implement, and how cost-effective is it compared to other safety measures, like, say, hiring more park workers? Or simply saving the funds for when and if we really need them?





Risk-benefit assessment means that the provider considers two goals alongside each other: the goal of protecting children from avoidable serious harm, and the goal of providing them with stimulating, adventurous play opportunities. It is about striking a balance.

Thank you.