



## Safe Kids of St. Joseph County

Ron Melser, Co-coordinator

(574) 272-2144 or [rmelser@clayfd.com](mailto:rmelser@clayfd.com)

Alice Blakesley R.N., Co-coordinator

(574) 647-2694 or [ablakesley@memorialsb.org](mailto:ablakesley@memorialsb.org)

[http://www.firesafetyzone.org/SafeKids\\_sjc](http://www.firesafetyzone.org/SafeKids_sjc)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
04-16-08

Contact: See Above

# April 21-25 is Playground Safety Week

**Safe Kids of St. Joseph County recommends playgrounds with soft surfaces**

**South Bend, IN** — Each year, approximately 15 children die from injuries involving playground equipment, and more than 200,000 are treated in emergency rooms. Falls account for 80 percent of playground injuries; however, most playground fatalities are caused by strangulation which tend to occur in a family's yard, not on public property.

National Playground Safety Week, April 21-25, will celebrate the 27th anniversary of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's *Handbook for Public Playground Safety*, which provides guidelines for protective surfacing and age-appropriate playground equipment for children. Today, 15 states refer to this landmark document or voluntary ASTM standards in their playground safety codes, according to the National Program for Playground Safety.

"Nothing can take the place of active supervision, but we do need to make sure our kids are playing in safe environments in the first place," says Ron Melser, Safe Kids of St. Joseph County coordinator. "Playground equipment should be labeled with a minimum age, and it should be surrounded by a protective surface."

Grass and soil are *not* good playground surfaces. "The ground should be covered 12 inches deep with shredded rubber, hardwood fiber mulch or fine sand, extending at least six feet in all directions around the equipment," says Ron Melser. "It won't prevent falls, but it can prevent injuries or reduce their severity."

Even nonfatal injuries from playground falls can be very serious. "A child who falls about 5 feet is four times as likely to be injured as a child who falls from a lower height. Also, a child who falls onto a hard surface such as asphalt or concrete is more than twice as likely of suffering an injury than a child falling onto an impact-absorbing surface," says Ron Melser.

Parents and caregivers need to keep kids in sight and in reach on the playground. "Simply being in the same place as your child isn't necessarily supervising," says Ron Melser. "Kids on a playground need your undivided attention."

Safe Kids of St. Joseph County also reminds parents and caregivers to:

- Make sure playground equipment is inspected frequently and kept in good repair.
- Remove hood and neck drawstrings from children's clothing and outerwear and do not allow kids to wear helmets, necklaces, purses or scarves on the playground.
- Don't allow your kids to engage in, or play near, any pushing, shoving or crowding around playground equipment.
- Keep toddlers under age 5 in a separate play area, fenced off from equipment designed for bigger kids.

The CPSC handbook is available at [www.cpsc.org](http://www.cpsc.org) or 800-638-2772. For more information about playground safety, visit [www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org).

Safe Kids of St. Joseph County works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Safe Kids of St. Joseph County is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids of St. Joseph County was founded in 2002 and is led by Memorial Hospital/Clay Fire Territory.

###