

Legal Briefs

A LEGAL NEWSLETTER FOR
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Playground Safety: Public and Home Playgrounds

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mentary.**

Playground equipment is a leading cause of injuries to children. It has been estimated that there are more than 200,000 playground equipment injuries each year, with approximately 50,000 injuries on home playgrounds to children under the age of 15. Many years of advocacy by The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and non-profit organizations like KaBOOM! have raised the standards for both public and private play spaces. It is important that parents, babysitters, teachers, and other adults understand the risks faced by children while using both public and private playgrounds.

CPSC completed a 10-year study in August 2000, which concluded that more deaths to children occurred on backyard playgrounds than on public playgrounds. During the time period of the study, the CPSC had reports of nearly 150 deaths to children under the age of 15 from playground equipment; at least 90 of these occurred in a home setting. Approximately three-quarters of the deaths at home locations resulted from hangings from ropes, cords, homemade rope, swings, and other similar items. It is important to understand safety standards for playground equipment, which are aimed at reducing the risk of strangulation. The makers of playground equipment warn against attaching additional ropes or other foreign objections around playground equipment.

With regard to private playgrounds, parents are encouraged to install and maintain protective surfacing, eliminate unsafe ropes and check for potential hazardous hooks and edges on swings and slides. Dirt and grass, which are the most prevalent surfaces under home playground equipment, do not adequately protect children from serious head injuries. The CPSC recommends a protective type of shock-absorbing surface under all playground equipment.

The CPSC, in order to help prevent injuries from falls and other hazards on home playgrounds, has the following safety tips:

- Install and maintain at least 9 inches of wood chips, mulch, or shredded rubber for play equipment up to 7 feet high. If

sand or pea gravel is used, install at least a 9 inch layer for play equipment up to 5 feet high. Or, use surfacing mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.

- Install protective surfacing at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, the surface should extend, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
- Never attach ropes, jump ropes, clothes lines, or pet leashes to the equipment. This can present a serious strangulation hazard to children.
- Smooth all sharp points or edges, and cover open "S" hooks or protruding bolts.
- Check for openings in guard rails or between ladder rungs. Spaces should be either less than 3 & 1/2 inches or more than 9 inches so that they do not present an entrapment hazard.
- Always supervise young children to make sure they are safe.

When taking children to a public playground, always inspect the playground and equipment to make sure that both are in good condition and that no hazards are present. Inspect the equipment carefully, looking for appropriate surfacing material. Inspect the equipment to make sure that no ropes or foreign objects are tied to the equipment. Check for exposed rocks, tree stumps, concrete footings, and sharp edges on playground equipment. If you see a safety hazard, notify the playground owner or manager.

For additional information, and for great resources with regard to the issue of both home and public playground safety, including a home playground safety checklist for use in your own playground, please visit the following websites: www.cpsc.gov or www.kaboom.org. While on the CPSC website, check out the Handbook for Public Playground Safety and look for other publications. You may also call the CPSC hotline at 1-800-638-2772. KaBOOM! is the national non-profit organization committed to building safe playgrounds for America's children through partnership with individuals, community groups, and businesses. In addition to their website, you may also call them at 1-202-659-0215.

ATTORNEY SPOTLIGHT

Melissa A. Timmerman has been an Associate Attorney with the South Sound office of Graham Lundberg & Peschel since February 2008. Melissa enjoys her work with Graham Lundberg & Peschel greatly, as she firmly believes that in addition to being exceptionally experienced, the staff at Graham Lundberg & Peschel genuinely cares about our clients.

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We are a team of legal professionals working together to advocate for the injured while being recognized in the community for providing the highest level of service.

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Graham Lundberg & Peschel – Attorneys at Law, since 1979, have offices throughout Western Washington including Seattle, Tacoma and Port Orchard. For a location near you, visit our Web site at www.glpattorneys.com. We handle all types of personal injury cases including motor vehicle accidents, slip & falls, product liability injuries, construction accidents and wrongful death.

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800-273-5005

Attorney Spotlight (cont'd)

Melissa is a member of the Washington State Bar Association, and the Washington State Trial Lawyer's Association-Eagle Member. She has practiced law in Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties, in addition to the Federal District Court of Western Washington. Melissa's favorite part of her job is that she has an impact on people's lives, ranging from making sure people receive the medical care they need to providing a secure future for family members who are left behind.

Born and raised in Dubuque, Iowa, Melissa moved to Washington State in 1994. She graduated from the University of Washington with a Bachelor of Arts in 1999 and then continued her education at Seattle University School of Law, graduating in 2002 with a Juris Doctorate.

Melissa lives in South King County. In her free time, you can often find her at the beach with her two large dogs, lending a hand at the family store, or trying diligently to catch up on her reading.

Annie Adamson joined Graham Lundberg & Peschel's South Sound Team as the Front Desk Coordinator in May 2006. In February 2007 she was promoted to Legal Assistant and in June 2007 to Paralegal. She currently serves as Paralegal for attorney Melissa Timmerman and Senior Managing Partner, Ken Golden.

Annie graduated from Rogers High School in Puyallup in 2000, and is currently enrolled in the Paralegal Program at Tacoma Community College. Annie expects to earn her Associates in Arts and Science, as well as her Paralegal Pro Certificate in the summer of 2009. She then plans to continue her studies at the University of Washington - Tacoma to obtain a BA in Liberal Arts. Annie likes working in the personal injury field because "We are able to take away from the clients the stress that making a claim can cause, allowing them to focus on a full recovery."



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