This document is provided as guidance and is not a legal document. It does not override or replace the need to be familiar with rules. Current rules may be found on the DLBC website.

Definitions

Stationary play equipment
Stationary play equipment includes play equipment and structures meant to stay in one location while in use. Examples of stationary play equipment include:

- Balance beams
- Climbing equipment
- Merry-go-rounds
- Seesaws or teeter totters
- Slides
- Swings
- Spring rockers

Throughout this document, stationary play equipment will simply be referred to as *play equipment*.

Designated play surface
A designated play surface is an elevated surface accessible to children meant for standing, walking, crawling, sitting, or climbing. Also, any accessible surface at least 2 inches in size with less than a 30 degree angle, regardless of its intended purpose, will be assessed as a designated play surface.

Designated play surfaces are referenced as a general indicator of how high off the ground a child can go while using a piece of play equipment. This reference is used to determine the type and depth of cushioning needed around a piece of equipment.

Use zone
This is the area beneath and surrounding a piece of play equipment. This area must be designated for unrestricted movement (meaning it is kept free of other objects) and is where a child could be expected to land when exiting or falling off of a piece of equipment.

Use zones

General equipment

Whether or not a piece of play equipment is required to have a use zone, and how large that use zone must be, is determined by 2 factors:

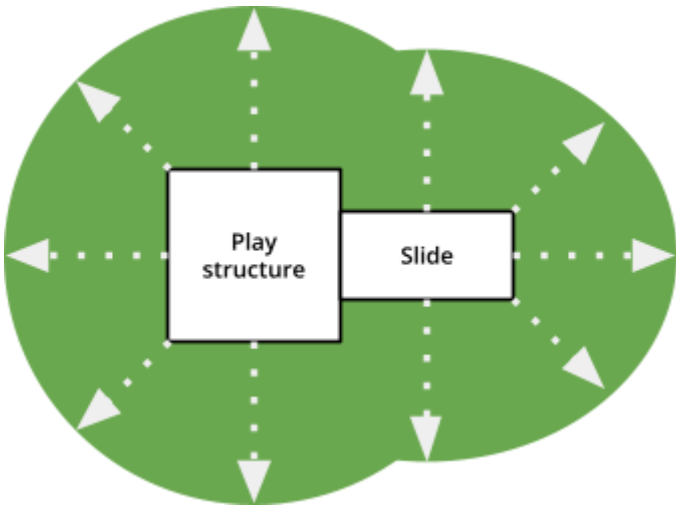
- The age of the children using the equipment
- The highest designated play surface of the equipment

The following table shows when a use zone is required based on the age group using the equipment and the highest designated play surface. It also displays the size of use zone required based on the age group using the equipment.

Use zones		
Age group	**Highest designated play surface**	**Use zone size**
Infants/toddlers (0-23 months)	19 inches or higher	3 feet
Preschoolers (2-4 years)	21 inches or higher	6 feet
School-age (5-12 years)	31 inches or higher	6 feet

Use zones extend from the outermost edges of a piece of equipment.

Below is an example of a use zone surrounding a simple play structure with a slide attached. The arrows indicate where the use zone is measured from. The green area indicates the required use zone. Notice that the shape and size of a use zone will be based on the shape and size of the equipment.



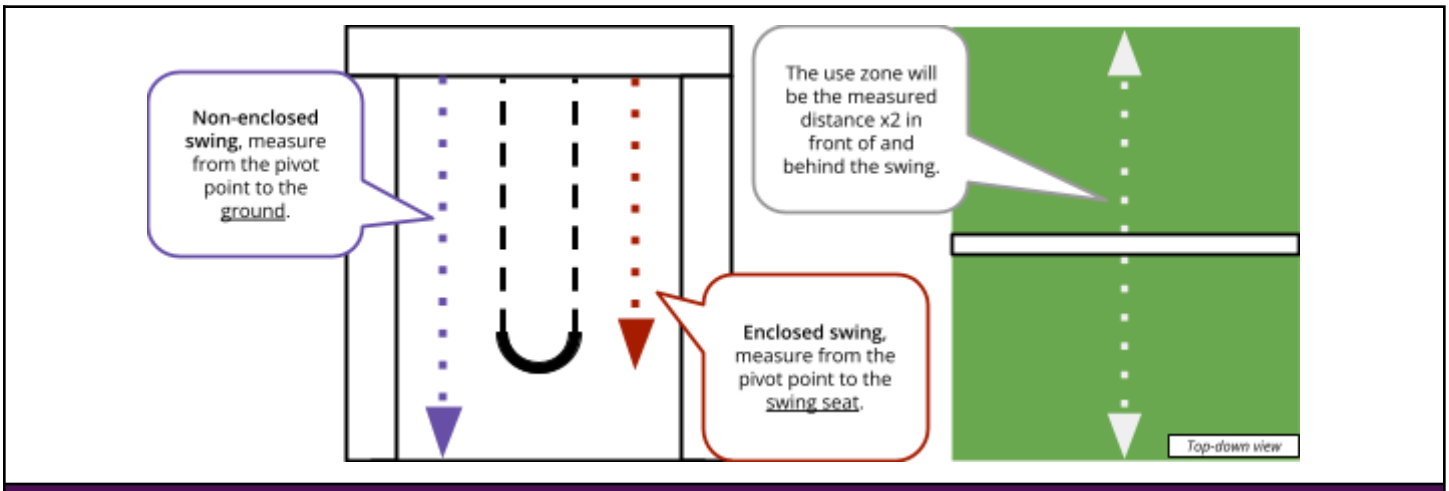
Example of general play equipment use zone

Swings

There are two categories of swings:

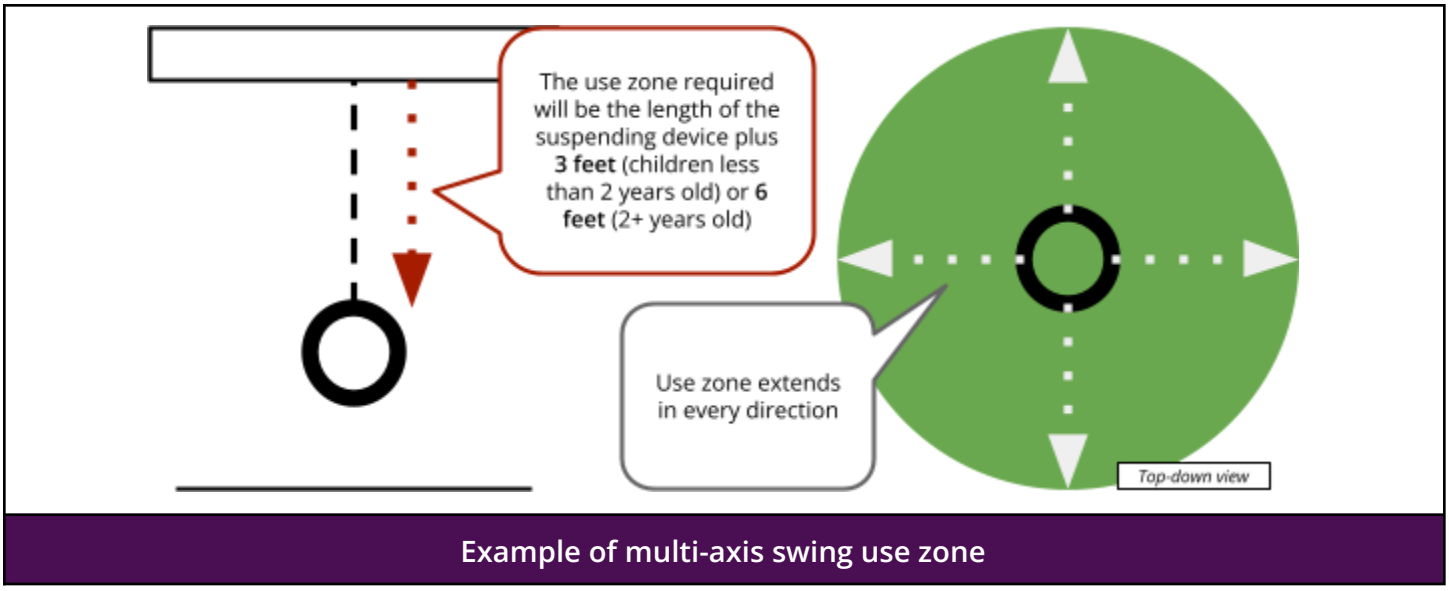
- **Single-axis:** A swing intended to go back and forth along a single axis
- **Multi-axis:** A swing intended to move along more than one axis

Single-axis swings are required to have a use zone in front of and behind the equipment that extends at least twice the distance measured from the swing's pivot point to the ground. If the swing has an enclosed seat, the use zone must be twice the distance from the pivot point to the swing seat.



Example of single-axis swing use zone

Multi-axis swings must have a use zone surrounding the entire device, as these swings are able to go in any direction. The required use zone size is the length of the suspending device (rope, cord, chain, etc.) plus 3 feet if the device is only used by infants/toddlers, or 6 feet if any child 2 years old or older uses it.



Example of multi-axis swing use zone

Cushioning

Cushioning materials

Approved cushioning materials include:

- Sand
- Gravel
- Shredded rubber products
- Shredded wood products
- Unitary cushioning

Cushioning depths

The depth of cushioning required is based on two factors:

- The highest designated play surface of the equipment
- The type of cushioning material used.

Consult the following tables to determine the depth of cushioning required if you use sand, gravel, shredded tires, or shredded wood products.

Cushioning depth for sand, gravel, or shredded rubber products					
Highest designated play surface	**Fine sand**	**Coarse sand**	**Fine gravel**	**Medium gravel**	**Shredded rubber product**
Up to 5 feet	6 inches	6 inches	6 inches	6 inches	6 inches
5 - 6 feet	6 inches	9 inches	6 inches	9 inches	6 inches
6 - 9 feet	9 inches	NOT ALLOWED	9 inches	NOT ALLOWED	6 inches
9 - 10 feet	NOT ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED	9 inches	NOT ALLOWED	6 inches
10 - 12 feet	NOT ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED	6 inches

Cushioning depth for shredded wood products			
Highest designated play surface	**Engineered wood fibers**	**Wood chips**	**Double shredded bark mulch**
Up to 6 feet	6 inches	6 inches	6 inches
6 - 7 feet	9 inches	6 inches	9 inches
7 - 11 feet	9 inches	9 inches	9 inches
Over 11 feet	9 inches	NOT ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED

Unitary cushioning

The most common types of unitary cushioning include tiled cushioning products and pour-in-place cushioning.

If unitary cushioning is used, documentation from the manufacturer indicating that the material installed is intended for use as playground cushioning must be kept onsite.

Protective barriers

Protective barriers are attached to play equipment to help prevent children from easily falling off an elevated surface. Similar to use zone requirements, play equipment is required to have a protective barrier based on:

- The age of the children using the equipment
- The highest designated play surface of the equipment

The table below shows when a protective barrier is required based on the age group using the equipment and the highest designated play surface. The height required for a protective barrier will also be based on the age group using the equipment.

Protective barriers		
Age group	**Highest designated play surface**	**Protective barrier height**
Infants/toddlers (0-23 months)	19 inches or higher	24 inches
Preschoolers (2-4 years)	31 inches or higher	29 inches
School-age (5-12 years)	49 inches or higher	38 inches

Protective barriers may not have a gap greater than 3 ½ inches in or under them.

Other safety concerns

Equipment stability

Play equipment must be stable while in use by a child. This may require that equipment be placed on a firm, flat surface, or that the equipment be anchored into the ground to reduce the possibility of the equipment shifting while in use.

Entrapment hazards

An entrapment hazard is an opening or gap in a piece of play equipment where a child's body could fit through, but not their head. Specifically, an opening or gap is considered to be an entrapment hazard if it is greater than 3 ½ x 6 ¼ inches and less than 9 inches in diameter.

Strangulation hazards

Strangulation hazards include items in which children may become entangled, or on which their clothing could become caught. For play equipment, there are three specific types of strangulation hazards:

- Protruding bolt ends extending more than 2 threads beyond the face of the nut
- Hardware forming a hook or that leaves a gap between components (includes S-hooks)
- Ropes, cords, or chains attached to a structure and long enough to encircle a child's neck

If a piece of play equipment is intentionally designed to have a rope, cord, or chain long enough to encircle a child's neck, it will not be assessed as a strangulation hazard as long as the equipment is properly assembled and used according to manufacturer guidelines. A common example would be the use of a swing set.

Crush, shearing, or sharp edge hazards

A crush or shearing hazard is present when a piece of play equipment has two parts moving relative to each other, or one part that moves relative to an unmoving part, that come together in such a way that they could crush or sever a child's fingers, toes, or other body part.

Sharp edge hazards include anything that could cut or puncture a child's skin. This may include components or surfaces that have developed a sharp edge due to damage or disrepair.

Tripping hazards

Tripping hazards include any large object over which a child could trip including concrete footings, tree stumps, tree roots, or rocks.