

# Winter Playground Safety Tips

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While the approach of winter means colder weather, that doesn't stop playtime!

As a result of snow and freezing conditions this time of year, unique hazards are possible on playground equipment and protective groundcovers. It is important to pay attention to changing weather conditions and monitor your playground regularly. Here are a few safety precautions to consider in order to keep your playground safe during winter:

- Remove snow when possible
- Preserve or repair wood and hardware
- Drainage system inspection
- Regular playground maintenance and cleaning

## Remove Snow When Possible

Although common surface materials like rubberized mulch aren't prone to freezing, the accumulation of snow presents a challenge and potential safety hazard. No matter how deep it is, **snow isn't considered to be a safe or protective groundcover**. When possible, try to remove it from around elevated play structures.

## Preserve or Repair Wood and Hardware

If you have wooden equipment on your playground, keep in mind that winter weather conditions have the potential to lead to deterioration, which can pose a significant safety risk. Consider using a nontoxic wood preservative to protect your equipment against the harsh weather. Additionally, make sure to inspect all hardware, as winter conditions can cause hardware to loosen. Ensure that you repair or replace all necessary hardware before the cold of winter really sets in.

## Drainage System Inspection

While protective groundcovers are tested in freezing conditions, the laboratory simulations occur on surfaces with ideal drainage. Materials such as Engineered Wood Fiber Mulch can freeze into a hard surface if there is inadequate drainage. If your protective groundcover has a history of freezing into a hard surface, consider having the drainage system inspected by a landscaping professional.

## Regular Playground Maintenance and Cleaning

Make sure to thoroughly clean and maintain all playground platforms and equipment as often as possible to prevent the buildup of ice and snow. Frequent inspection of slide surfaces, ladders, handrails, and platforms can help you detect ice and eliminate a potential slipping hazard. Additionally, using a nontoxic ice melt can be helpful for stubborn ice on sidewalks, blacktops, and gutter run-off areas.