

CERTIFIED PLAYGROUND SAFETY INSPECTIONS FOR IPARKS MEMBERS

By Hillary Waddle and Jason Johnston

At IPARKS, we make risk management easy. That is true when it comes to identifying playground safety hazards. Did you know that IPARKS has its very own Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) in Risk Control Specialist Jason Johnston? A Certified Playground Safety Inspector is a professional trained in playground safety issues including hazard identification, equipment specifications, surfacing requirements and risk management methods. The Certified Playground Safety Inspector certification program is the most comprehensive training program on playground hazard identification and risk management methods offered nationwide by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).



Helping our members reduce their liability has a real impact on the day-to-day lives of the people they serve.

— Jason Johnston

Jason has been a CPSI for five years and takes pride in the work he does every day to keep Illinois playgrounds as safe as possible. “I enjoy visiting IPARKS members all over the state to help them improve the quality and safety of their parks and playgrounds. Helping our members reduce their liability has a real impact on the day-to-day lives of the people they serve. Traveling to various communities throughout the state and visiting park districts of all sizes is extremely rewarding. I deeply appreciate the relationships I’ve built during my time with IPARKS,” stated Jason. Furthermore, he

Having a playground inspection completed on a regular basis is of critical importance. Not only does it protect your agency from liability, but it also keeps children and community members safe while using playground equipment. Jason’s thorough inspection includes fire and safety hazards, life safety hazards and playground safety hazards. Playground equipment has changed considerably over the past 50 years, and playground structures that used to be deemed safe may now be considered potential hazards. From merry-go-rounds, to monkey bars, to slides and swings, you can help ensure your parks are safe by contacting Jason Johnston.

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OUR PROMISE

Your IPARKS membership makes it easy for you to provide safe places to play, relax and enjoy. By making safety a priority, we empower you to improve upon best practices and work in collaboration with your fellow members to protect your district, assets and those you serve.

HALLOWEEN EVENT SAFETY

Halloween can be one of the biggest and most enjoyable events of the year.

Member agencies may host parades, costume parties, hayrides, haunted houses and more. In doing so, members may not be thinking about the all-too-frightening consequences they could face if someone were to get injured while attending these events.

However, accidents can be prevented with good preparation and risk management. A safe and fun Halloween-themed event can be enjoyed by all when safety tips are followed.

HAUNTED HOUSES

- Choose a location that is safe. Determine how many people will be present in an event space in relation to the building's or event space's square footage. Be familiar with local fire and safety codes and utilize the assistance of the local fire marshal. Only facilities that are compliant with building, fire and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) codes should be used. Other crucial factors to consider when choosing a location include:

- Functioning smoke detectors
- Automatic and manual fire alarm systems
- Certified sprinkler systems
- Fire extinguishers placed at least every 75 feet
- Parking lots with accessible fire lanes

- Parking lots with sufficient vehicle access and egress routes
- Audible/visual alarm systems
- Emergency lighting
- Design the event, parking lot and surrounding areas so that the event can handle a large volume of patrons. Public areas should be well lit and free from any obstacles or trip hazards.
- All exit signs should be clearly identified and egress routes should be unobstructed. There should be at least two different exits on opposite ends of the building. Directional exit signs should be placed throughout the attraction, pointing to the nearest exit. The signs should be placed six to eight feet off the ground so they can be seen should the ceiling be filled with smoke.
- First-aid kits, including automatic external defibrillators (AED), should be placed in visible locations.
- Smoking, open flames and temporary heating sources should be prohibited.
- Highly flammable materials, such as cotton batting, straw, dried plant material and certain plastics, should not be used for decoration or construction. However, if used, they should be treated with an appropriate flame retardant.



Photo courtesy of Springfield Park District.

- Extension cords, multi-plug adapters and unfused plug strips should not be used. Only circuit breaker strips or code-approved wiring should be permitted. Wiring should be placed so that it does not create trip hazards for guests.
- Consider establishing a rule that younger children must be accompanied by an adult to visit haunted houses.
- Limit the number of visitors for escorted groups to a fixed amount. For example, every group has 15 visitors with an escort, regardless of the age of the group. The escort, or guide, should be at least 18 years old, carrying a working flashlight and be completely familiar with the facility.
- If needed, agencies should request the assistance of the local police department to ensure safety is the top priority. A sketch of the floor plan should be provided to the servicing fire department in advance of the event.
- Agencies should have a written emergency evacuation and emergency response plan that covers potential emergency situations, such as inclement weather, equipment failure, fire or medical emergencies. This plan should be thoroughly reviewed so that all employees and volunteers are on the same page for the event and everyone's safety.



Photo courtesy of Salt Creek Rural Park District.

HAYRIDES

In addition to haunted houses, many member agencies choose to provide their communities with hayrides during the fall. For this type of activity, it is important that tractors and wagons be thoroughly inspected each day to ensure safe operation.

- Hay wagons can be subjected to great stress and overloading must be avoided. Agencies should calculate how many people can safely fit on each wagon and never exceed that limit.
- The wagons should be checked for any sharp edges or splinters and repaired as necessary.
- Side railings should be high enough to keep patrons contained inside the trailer and the steps should be off the back of the trailer.
- The wagon should have reflective tape around all sides with appropriate signage.
- Drivers for this activity should be both experienced and qualified to operate the tractor or horses.

For questions or more information on how to prepare for your agency's Halloween-themed event, please contact your Risk Control Specialist, Jason Johnston, at (815) 275-7886 or jjohnston@iparks.org. To view the full Safety Checklists and Best Practices for Haunted Houses and Hayrides, visit the Documents section of the IPARKS Resource eLibrary.

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is a trusted advisor on how members can continue to enhance their playground's safety in the future, while also providing recommendations to repair current safety hazards.



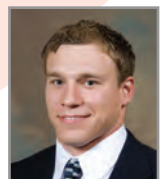
**Certified
Playground
Safety Inspector**

IPARKS understands the financial implications of remedying these hazards, which is why the Power Grant and the Swing Modification Programs are available to members. With these programs, IPARKS can help members offset the financial impact of safety recommendations. Members may also utilize the Power Grant reimbursement to certify their own employees through the CPSI training course. To read more about the

specifics of each grant, please visit www.iparks.org.

IPARKS is fortunate to have a specialist in Jason Johnston, who can conduct certified playground

safety inspections on a regular basis for members. If you have questions on a past inspection, a current hazard, or would like to schedule an inspection, please contact Jason via email at jjohnston@iparks.org, or call (815) 275-7886.



WHERE IS THE PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHER?

Do you know where the fire extinguishers are located in your building or where they should be located?

To help prevent further spread of fires, extinguishers require correct placement. Extinguishers should be located so they are easily available to occupants when evacuating a building. Heading toward a fire to retrieve a fire extinguisher only puts people in danger as they risk being injured and trapped.

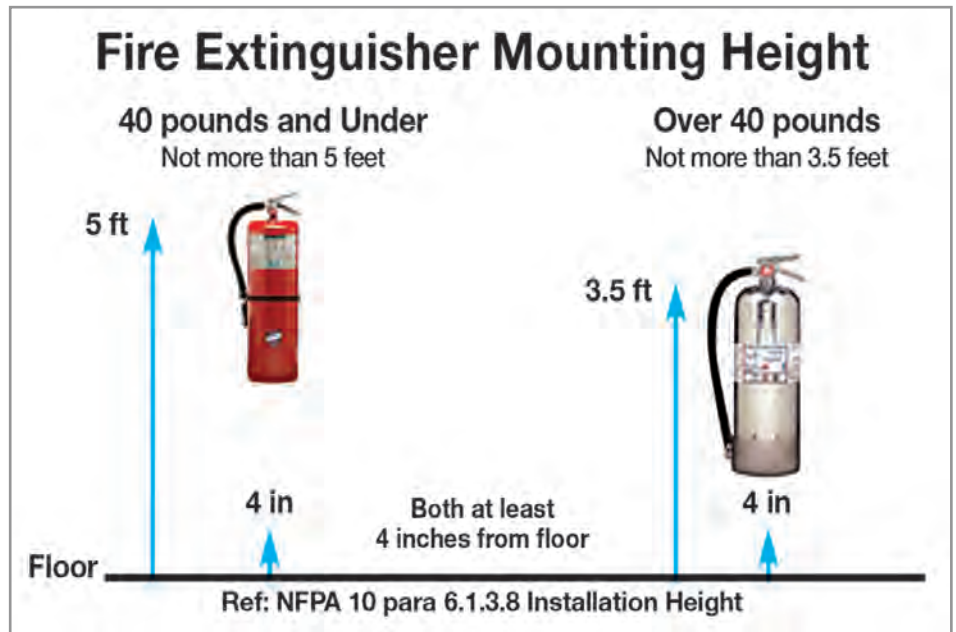
Two key factors in the appropriate and safe use of fire extinguishers, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), are visibility and accessibility. For visibility, NFPA states, "If visual obstructions cannot be avoided, then arrows, lights or signs are needed to help indicate where a fire extinguisher is located." For accessibility, NFPA states, "Extinguishers should be placed where they are readily accessible in the event of a fire, which typically includes normal paths of travel." Additionally, all fire extinguishers should be marked with a sign so they are easily identifiable and the path to each one should be unobstructed.

In addition to visibility and accessibility, consider the weight of the fire extinguisher. According to the NFPA, there are different placement guidelines if the extinguisher weighs less or more than 40 pounds.

- **If the fire extinguisher weighs less than 40 pounds** – the bottom of the extinguisher must be at least 4 inches off the ground, and the top of the extinguisher cannot be more than 5 feet from the ground.
- **If the fire extinguisher weighs more than 40 pounds** – the bottom of the extinguisher must be at least 4 inches off the ground, and the top of the extinguisher cannot be more than 3.5 feet from the ground. These placement guidelines apply to fire extinguishers in cabinets and on walls but do not include wheeled extinguishers.

Fire extinguishers should be mounted to prevent them from being moved, misplaced or damaged. Dropping a fire extinguisher can damage the operable parts and weaken the casing. To make certain all extinguishers are in working order, an annual inspection should be completed by a professional service and noted on the tag hanging on the fire extinguisher.

Finally, it is important to have the correct type of fire extinguisher for the types of fire hazards in your work area. There are five



classifications of fire and therefore, specific fire extinguishers for each type.



Class A Fires: Fires involving ordinary combustibles, such as wood, paper, cloth, rubber and many plastics.



Class B Fires: Fires involving flammable liquids – such as gasoline, petroleum greases, tars, oils, oil-based paints, solvents and alcohols – or flammable gases, propane and butane. DOES NOT include fires involving cooking oils and grease.



Class C Fires: Fires involving energized electrical equipment, such as computers, servers, motors, transformers and appliances. Remove the power and a Class C fire becomes one of the other classes of fire.



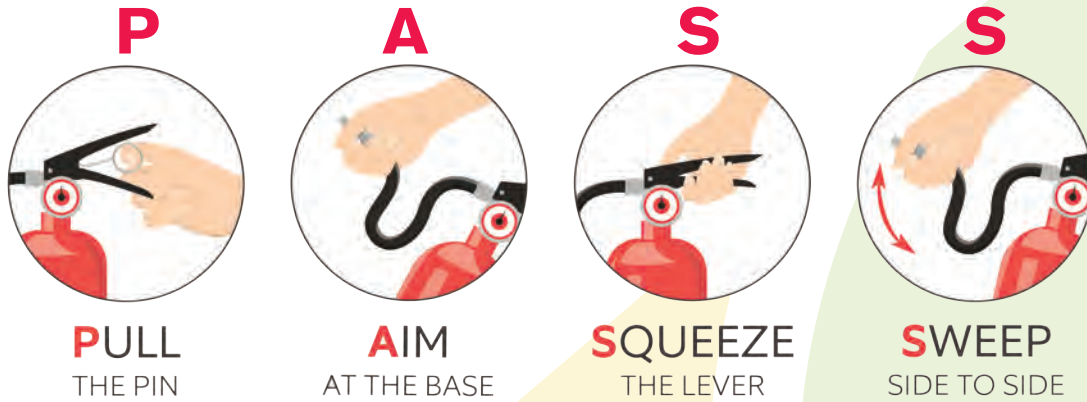
Class D Fires: Fires involving combustible metals, such as magnesium, titanium, zirconium, sodium, lithium and potassium.



Class K Fires: Fires involving cooking oils and greases, such as animal and vegetable fats.

Some types of fire-extinguishing agents can be used on more than one class of fire. Others have warnings where it would

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be dangerous for the operator to use on a particular fire-extinguishing agent.

Make certain that documented fire extinguisher training and evacuation training are conducted annually.

THE RULES FOR FIGHTING FIRES. REMEMBER THE THREE A'S:

- 1. ACTIVATE** the building alarm system or notify the fire department by calling 911. Or, have someone else do this for you.
- 2. ASSIST** any persons in immediate danger, or those incapable on their own, to exit the building, without risk to yourself.
- 3. ATTEMPT** to extinguish the fire ONLY AFTER activating the building alarm system and assisting any persons in immediate danger.

Only fight a fire if:

- The fire is small and contained
- You are safe from toxic smoke
- You have a means of escape
- Your instincts tell you it's OK

TO USE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER, REMEMBER PASS:

P - PULL THE PIN at the top of the extinguisher. The pin releases a locking mechanism and will allow you to discharge the extinguisher.

A - AIM at the base of the fire and not at the flames. You must extinguish the fuel to the fire.

S - SQUEEZE the lever. This will release the extinguishing agent in the extinguisher. If the handle is released, the discharge will stop.

S - SWEEP from side to side. Using a sweeping motion, move the fire extinguisher back and forth until the fire is completely out.

Remember, the most important thing is to get yourself and others out of the building alive. IPARKS members can purchase new fire extinguishers with the IPARKS Power Grant, and the IPARKS Resource eLibrary contains fire safety resources and training videos. For more detailed information about fire extinguishers, refer to www.nfpa.org.

REMINDER TO TAKE ILLINOIS SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION TRAINING

The Illinois Human Rights Act requires employers with at least one employee to train all employees on sexual harassment prevention each calendar year before December 31 and annually thereafter.

In the Resource eLibrary, IPARKS provides its members with access to online sexual harassment prevention training for both

employees and supervisors, compliant with Section 2-109.

Once completed, the trainings produce a Certificate of Completion, which is required to be kept on file. You can find these trainings in both the HR Portal (Zywave) and NeoGov LEARN (formerly PEU). Please reach out to your marketing representative if you have any questions.



3 MORE KEY CYBER CONTROLS

This is the third article in a series of articles addressing key cyber controls.

By Colette Klier, CISA, CPFA, A+ Senior Manager IT Risk Control

The next three controls include:

Incident Response Planning, Cybersecurity Awareness Training and Secure Remote Access.

In today's digital age, agencies are constantly facing cyber threats that can result in devastating consequences if not handled properly. Incidents like cyber-attacks and data breaches can



cause significant damage to an agency's reputation, finances and public trust. To combat these threats, agencies need to have a robust cybersecurity strategy that includes incident response planning, cybersecurity awareness training and secure remote access. We will explore the benefits of these practices and how they can help agencies stay protected.

Incident Response Planning is the process of preparing for the response to security incidents such as cyber-attacks, data breaches and system failures. Having a well-defined incident response plan in place can help agencies minimize the impact of a security incident by enabling them to respond quickly and efficiently. Benefits of incident response planning include:

- 1.) Reduced Downtime:** In the event of a security incident, a well-planned response can help minimize downtime and ensure that systems and services are restored as quickly as possible.
- 2.) Faster Recovery:** A good incident response plan can help agencies recover from an incident faster by enabling them to quickly identify the cause of the incident and take corrective action.
- 3.) Improved Resilience:** By regularly testing and updating their incident response plan, agencies can improve their resilience to security incidents and reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

Cybersecurity Awareness Training is the process of educating employees on best practices for protecting sensitive information and systems from cyber threats. Benefits of cybersecurity awareness training include:

- 1.) Reduced Risk of Insider Threats:** Employees who are trained in cybersecurity awareness are less likely to engage in risky behavior that could result in a security incident, such as clicking on a phishing link or downloading malware.
- 2.) Increased Vigilance:** Awareness training can help employees identify potential security threats and report them to the appropriate authorities, reducing the likelihood of a successful cyber-attack.
- 3.) Improved Compliance:** Cybersecurity awareness training can help agencies comply with regulatory requirements, such as HIPAA and PCI-DSS, by ensuring that employees understand their responsibilities and the consequences of non-compliance.

Secure Remote Access is essential for many agencies, but it also introduces security risks. Secure remote access solutions can help agencies minimize these risks while still allowing employees to work from anywhere. Benefits of secure remote access include:

- 1.) Increased Productivity:** Secure remote access solutions enable employees to work from anywhere, increasing productivity and flexibility.
- 2.) Improved Security:** Secure remote access solutions provide agencies with greater control over who has access to sensitive information and systems, reducing the risk of a security incident.
- 3.) Reduced Costs:** By enabling remote work, secure remote access solutions can help agencies reduce costs associated with office space and commuting.

Incident Response Planning, Cybersecurity Awareness Training and Secure Remote Access are all essential components of a robust cybersecurity strategy. By investing in these practices, agencies can reduce the risk of security incidents, minimize the impact of incidents that do occur and improve their overall security posture. As cyber threats continue to evolve, it is important for agencies to stay current on best practices and

continue to adapt their cybersecurity strategies to protect against new threats.



Colette Klier, CISA, CPFA, has over 20 years of experience in the information technology field. Colette's work enforcing and enhancing security measures has extended to both public and private industries including government, human services, IT consulting, insurance and pension.

TIME TO TAKE CARE OF THE PIPES

If you are tasked with winterizing and de-winterizing, don't forget the pipes.

First, identify all of the agency's buildings, facilities, parks, camps and restrooms with plumbing. Make sure every pipe is accounted for, and by October of each year, take the time to winterize those pipes.

WINTERIZING PIPES

According to Klaus Reichardt, CEO and founder of Waterless Company Inc., when water is left in fixtures and pipes, it expands in wintry weather and may turn to ice. This puts stress and pressure on the fixture, the pipe and the pipe connections. This can often cause damage, even rupturing the pipe and fixture. A ruptured pipe promises at least one result: a hefty plumbing bill.

However, experts recommend the following procedure to prevent damage from occurring in the first place. Winterize your pipes following the steps below:

- Be sure to turn the water off at the pump or the water source.
- Open all the taps, and leave them open. A closed tap can create a vacuum in the pipe if closed for a prolonged period. Conversely, an open tap allows any water in the pipe to drain out. Klaus also recommends flushing all toilets and urinals. This also helps remove excess water from pipes.
- Finally, depending on the plumbing in your facility, turn off the water heater and drain it.

That's it! You're now done and ready for the winter season.

DE-WINTERIZING PIPES

What happens when buildings, facilities and recreational areas reopen in the spring? Many experts note that there is an entirely distinct set of plumbing procedures to follow to de-winterize the pipes. The process is in many ways the opposite of the former and usually looks like this:

- Turn on the water supply to the facility.
- Turn the water heater on; make sure the water-heater drain is closed.
- Turn on faucets and flush toilets and urinals. The water may sputter a bit; this is normal as the pipes become filled and express the air in the system.
- Check the plumbing air vents on top of the facility for leaves and debris. Known as vent stacks, they regulate air pressure, allow fresh air into the plumbing system and release foul air. If leaves and debris are present, the vents must be cleaned to ensure they work properly.

- Look – and listen – for leaks throughout the facility. Pipe fittings may need to be tightened after months of non-use.



Further, many experts recommend checking for odors in locker rooms, changing rooms, kitchen areas and restrooms. A water leak in a basement or in a crawl space under a building may be causing these odors. In addition, a loose or broken pipe seal, a cracked pipe or a U-trap that has dried up may cause the odors. The U-trap is the pipe under the sink. It is found

under all drains connected to all water-using fixtures.

Although foul odors might merely seem like a nuisance, these odors can be a warning. Reichardt warns that the odors can be fumes coming from a sewer/drain line. Typically, they contain a variety of pathogens, germs and bacteria that can harm human health when inhaled – especially if those inhaling these fumes are children or seniors. If the fumes are left unchecked, asthma, headaches, nausea and other ill-health effects can result. The key is to remove the source of the odors to protect the health of building users.

ADDRESSING FOUL ODORS

Reichardt recommends if the odors result from cracked or broken seals or pipes, a building engineer or plumber will need to repair them. If your facility does not have an engineer on staff, it is time to call a plumber. A plumber may go further than making the necessary repairs. A plumber may also inspect all visible pipes and connection areas, looking for potential trouble spots and repairing them to prevent problems in the future.

As for the U-trap drying out, experts suggest a plumber may not be needed to fix the problem, but it is imperative to avoid the following:

- **Do not** pour bleach, chemicals or products made to unclog drains down the drain. These products contain ingredients that may interact with substances in the pipes, causing more fumes to be released.
- **Do not** ignore the problem. Opening windows or installing odor-killing products are just cover-ups. The root cause of the odor must be addressed.

Instead, experts recommend the following:

- Make sure the vent stack is open, clear and operating correctly. The only way to accomplish this is to get on the roof and inspect it.

CONT'D ON BACK COVER

IPARKS Service Center
315 S. Kalamazoo Mall
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

If our mailing records need to be updated, please contact the IPARKS Service Center at (800) 748-0554, ext. 3136.
Newsletters are available for viewing and printing at www.iparks.org.

CALL FOR CALENDAR PHOTOS REMINDER

Now is the time... to submit those beautiful photos of your agency representing the different seasons, special events, your personnel, parks and citizens for inclusion in the 2024 IPARKS Calendar. Submit your photos to iparks@bfgroup.com.

The photo submission deadline is **October 13, 2023**. To submit a photo or for more details, including submission guidelines, please visit www.iparks.org.



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- Pour about two cups of water down all drains as soon as possible. While this is a temporary fix, it will fill the dried U-traps, blocking sewer odors from being released.
- Pour a liquid primer in each drain. Different manufacturers market these products. They are sometimes called an "ever prime" or "ever primer." These liquids not only fill the U-trap to prevent the release of odors but also are unaffected by hot or cold weather, and evaporate very slowly, if at all, making them effective for several months.

Note: Add this step to your winterizing procedure. Adding a liquid primer to all drains right before closing for the winter can help prevent this problem entirely.

If the odors continue from U-traps after these measures are taken, a plumber may be necessary. The odors may indicate pipes and fittings have become corroded. If that happens, there may be a leak in the U-trap, so even if it is filled with water or a liquid primer, it empties quickly. In such cases, the plumber will likely replace the entire U-trap. What is

most important is not to ignore these odors. View them as a health risk because that's precisely what they are.

Klaus Reichardt is CEO and founder of Waterless Company Inc., Vista, Calif. Reichardt founded the company in 1991. Reichardt is a frequent writer and presenter, discussing water conservation issues.



It pays to be part of IPARKS, a financially sound and successful program.