

March-Safe Play Areas

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According to the CDC, there are approximately 1.5 children that live of a farm. As a child, if you are not able to go to a playground, your next best thing is to play in your backyard. However, for some farm children, their backyard is a workplace as well and a farm can be the most dangerous place for a child to play. Things such as getting into grain bins, having access to an ATV, climbing over and under large equipment, access to chemicals or sharp items that are laying around a farm make this space a very unsafe place. Each year on a farm, according to the National Farm Medicine Center, there are more than 100 death of children and 32,800 injured due to playing. There are many ways to prevent having a child injured while playing on a farm.

- Step 1: Have an area fenced off for a child to play in.
 - Kid friendly fencing include netting, mesh, a chain wire, or a solid fence with a latching gate. There are some playground gates that also have a safety latch for young children.
 - Before digging, don't forget to call JULIE, Inc. at 811. You want to make sure you know exactly where your utilities are under the ground. Also, it is important to look overhead for electrical lines and other hazards.
 - In this area, you should make sure you do not have any sharp objects and have appropriate play materials. Using grain in place of sand in a sandbox is NOT acceptable. Kids can become confused about why it is safe to play in it in a play area and not in a bin or wagon.
 - Make sure you also use proper ground covering. Playground rubber mulch is ideal. It is best to have no less than 3 inches in a playground but 4-6 inches is better.
 - The fenced off area is away from any open water and any loud noise.
 - Please remember a tractor or a barn is not a safe area for a child.

- A child needs to be supervised by someone that is focused on just the wellbeing of the child(ren). A parent maybe focused on getting their work done instead watching the child.
- Step 2: All motor vehicles should move slower while a child is playing outside. Make sure all children are accounted for any time you move machinery.
- Step 3: ATVs and Youth
 - Make sure all unattended ATVs are turned off, have their breaks locked, keys removed and put away securely.
 - Make sure they wear their helmets, long clothing, gloves, ankle boots, and protective goggles.
 - Make sure the kids know where they can and cannot ride.
 - Always watch under supervision.
 - Reinforce that ATVs are designed for one rider only.
- Step 4: Supply age appropriate toys and equipment
 - Make sure all toys and other equipment are changing as the child grows and brain starts to develop with the child.
 - Make sure all toys are free from rust and not broken.
- Step 5: Set rules.
 - Rules help children not wonder off or do something that will cause them harm to themselves or others.
- Step 6: Make all equipment safe for children.
 - Make sure the all equipment is anchored to the ground. (If you have to dig, do not forget to call JULIE.)
Make sure the play structures are free from rust, chipping paint and sharp edges.
 - Ensure no share objects or edges.

For more information, please contact the Carle Center for Rural Health and Farm Safety at 365-7961 or visit www.carle.org/farmsafety.