#PlayToday
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promoting the value of play

TRESTLES (A-FRAMES)

Moveable play equipment such as trestles (A-frames) are an excellent way to keep playspaces fresh and stimulating as they can be rearranged regularly, and mixed and matched with a variety of planks and other add-ons.

When setting up operators should take particular care to ensure that trestles are set securely on a firm, flat base in order to reduce the prospect of the equipment becoming unbalanced and rocking or tipping.

When positioning moveable equipment, Play Australia recommends that supervisors undertake a common sense risk assessment of each specific arrangement, taking into account the ages and developmental stages of the children utilising the equipment.

Like any other item of playground equipment, trestles are covered by Australian playground standards. These standards are primarily concerned with eliminating potentially hazardous entrapment situations as well as with reducing the risk of head injury as a result of falls from height.

Unlike fixed playground equipment moveable play equipment is not required to have handrails, guardrails or barriers.

Fall heights

The maximum height of moveable play equipment, including trestles, in supervised early childhood services is 1500mm (1.5 metres) (4.2.101, per Appendix ZZ) above the standing surface (normally mulch or rubber).

When determining the maximum height of equipment provided in your particular playspace a lower maximum height may be appropriate based on a range of considerations including the age of the children, the amount of space available (including pedestrian flows and potential congestion) and any other relevant cultural or developmental consideration.

Trestles that are 600mm (0.6 metres) or more high, like any other playground structure, are required to have impact attenuating surfacing underneath and surrounding the equipment to a minimum of 1500mm (1.5 metres) on all sides.

This 1500mm wide impact zone must generally be free of obstructions (such as edging and other playground equipment) except where multiple items of playground equipment are arranged in a cluster in order to provide continuity of a sequence. In this case the impact zone applies to the cluster as a whole, although care should nonetheless be taken to avoid arrangements that introduce obvious hazards.

Entrapment

Fully bound openings in equipment should be assessed for possible head entrapments where the lowest edge of the gap is more than 600mm above the ground.

Head and neck entrapments are an issue because a child's head is normally the largest part of their body. A child who is able to pass their feet and body through a gap may nonetheless find that it is not possible for their head to also pass through, potentially resulting in the child hanging by the neck with the weight of their body unsupported.

Standards recommend that gaps between 89mm (torso probe) and 230mm (large head probe D) should be avoided, however Australian Standards note that

> *The dimensions of head probe D are based on those for an older child and, therefore, there will be a large tolerance if assessing equipment for use by a young child.* (AS4685, D.2.1.2).

Similarly, there may be some tolerance regarding the lowest point at which a gap becomes a concern if a trestle will be used exclusively by older children.

When assessing trestles for head and neck entrapments pay attention both to the gaps between rungs on each face, as well as to other gaps such as those around side braces and also to the distance between the top two rungs on each face (front and back) immediately below the apex rung.

Where new gaps are created by combining two items of equipment (such as planks and ladders), or where the size of existing gaps is likely to change, these gaps should also be assessed.

If you discover unacceptable entrapments within your trestles it may be possible for a welder to remove the rungs and reset them at the appropriate measurements, or simply to remove one or more rungs to increase the width of a gap.

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