



CHILD CARE ALERT:

Testing results released about surfacing used under indoor playground equipment

Why

Many times, child care centers have playground equipment inside. The typical surfacing provided for this equipment are carpet, mats or safety tiles. In order to ensure that children are safe from falls inside as well as outside, NPPS undertook a study of community used surfaces found under indoor playground equipment.

What

Twenty-four different products were obtained from 20 national suppliers and manufacturers of child care and exercise/tumbling/gymnastic equipment.

8 exercise mats	2 rest mats	1 tumbling mat
4 folding mats	2 fitness mats	1 play mat
3 landing mats	2 carpet samples	1 safety floor tile

None of the mats were intended for use under the playground equipment, although a survey found that they were being used as surfacing in child care centers. None had tags indicating they had undergone standard testing for basic tumbling mats. Thus, none had been tested for critical height.

Results

- Nearly 60% of the materials tested had critical height of one foot or less.
* **Carpet and safety floor tiles provided virtually no fall protection.**
- Only landing mats at 4 inches of thickness consistently registered critical height above 3 feet for falls to the surface.
- Neither the cost or type of mat were consistently associated with an acceptable critical height for falls to the surface.
- In addition, there were problems of stabilization and securing of play structures and mats in place so that they would not move when they were hit.

Recommendation

If you have playground equipment inside, then you need to use materials specifically designed and tested as playground surfacing under and around equipment.

These surfaces include:

Unitary	Rubber mats
Materials:	Rubber tiles
	Poured-in-place rubber composition

Remember: Be as SAFE inside as out!

For further information check: Mack, M., Sacks, J., Hudson, S., and Thompson, D. (2001). "The impact attenuation performance of materials used under indoor playground equipment at child care centers." *Injury Control and Safety Prevention*, Vol 8, No. 1.

Reprinted with permission from the National Program for Playground Safety, School of Health, Physical Education & Leisure Services, University of Northern Iowa. www.uni.edu/playground