
The Redwoods Group Insurance Program for YMCAs

RISK MANAGEMENT ALERT

TOPIC: Zip-line Slides and Horizontal Gliders

A piece of play equipment that historically has been found only in camp settings, and even there not too frequently, is the zip-line slide.

However, this inexpensive-to-install apparatus is beginning to find its way into several new, more accessible settings and thus should be more carefully considered. Because of low initial cost, they are being donated by kind-hearted groups to school playgrounds, daycare centers, public parks, and even YMCA facilities. Zip-lines have enormous potential for fun, but they also have enormous probability for injury, frequently serious. Safe installations consider the following four categories, but stellar work in the first three will be negated by laxness in the last.

- **Design:** adequate consideration and selection of the site and physical components;
- **Installation:** proper and substantial cable anchoring and resilient surface preparation;
- **Maintenance:** documented, regular, and responsive; includes documented inspections
- **Supervision:** ownership, operation, participants, monitoring;

The first three areas of responsibility deal mostly with physical items, and as such are relatively easy to evaluate and track. Potential deficiencies (parenthetically noted) are mostly found in the following areas:

- support or anchor connection (suitability, condition, method and placement of mounting);
- cable or rail (capacity, anchoring, height, tension, slope, condition);
- carriage (carrier design and access, roller condition and guarding, loose bolts);
- handle, peg, or seat (design, method of attachment);
- starting point (excessive elevation, inadequately provisioned access);
- termination (stop-block securement, amount of cable sag, distance from sag to cable end);
- fall absorption material (missing, improper, inadequate area, inadequate depth);

The latter area of responsibility deals with actions and non-actions, attributes of participants who are constantly changing, unstable conditions like weather, site condition, degree and quality of supervision, and legal considerations like use agreements, hold-harmless and indemnity clauses, etc. Thus, although this is the most critical aspect, it is also the most difficult to evaluate and track. Challenges are found in:

- ownership (attractive nuisance hazard, installation, maintenance, use agreements);
- use (use agreements, inspection, maintenance, local condition responses)

- participants (appropriate with regard to age, size, physical condition, and number)
- monitoring (adequate staffing, proper positioning, attentive demeanor, no unsupervised use)

More detail on this subject may be found in [Zip-Line Slides](#) on our website.

Please call us at 800-463-8546 to discuss this or any other risk management safety tip, or visit our web site at www.redwoodsgroup.com to learn more about YMCA risk management issues.