Iowa Department of Public Health
Division of Environmental Health

After the Flood: Cleaning Playground Equipment

Overview: Floodwater can contaminate playground equipment and surfaces with debris, sewage and toxic chemicals. Playgrounds should be cleaned to make sure children are not injured and do not get sick.

How should I clean up playground equipment?

Do not allow children onto the playground until it has been cleaned. Use rope or temporary fence to block access to the playground. Post "Do Not Use Playground" signs.

- Rinse mud, sewage and other debris from playground equipment using soap and water. Pressure washers may be effective.
- Disinfect the equipment by thoroughly wetting equipment with a solution of bleach and water and allow to air dry. **Prepare the solution following manufacturers label instructions for disinfecting.**
- Rinse equipment with clean water after 24 hours.
- Lubricate hardware and movable parts on the equipment.

What should I do with the playground surfacing?

Playground surfaces need to be cleaned so that children are not exposed to debris, bacteria, and toxic chemicals. Most playground surfaces are covered with loose-fill material.

Loose-fill material should be totally removed and replaced. Discarded surfacing material may be put into a landfill. Please check with local landfill operators prior to discarding the surfacing.

Loose-fill playground surfacing includes:

- Sand and pea gravel
- wood chips, mulch, and engineered wood fiber
- shredded rubber tires and rubber mats
- other loose fill material

Solid playground surfaces, such as poured-in-place or rubber tiles, need to be power-washed to remove contaminants. Disinfect solid playground surfaces with bleach and water solution. Loose tiles or loose surfaces should be replaced. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Source: National Program for Playground Safety

Reviewed 5/10/2013