A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that emergency departments see more than 20,000 children ages 14 and younger for playground-related traumatic brain injury each year. Nearly 80 percent of playground injuries are caused by falls and lack of supervision is associated with approximately 45 percent of all injuries.

Playground Hazards
The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission identified the following playground hazards parents should be on the lookout for before allowing their children to play:

- **Improper protective surfaces**: Fall surfaces should be made of wood chips, mulch, wood fibers, sand, pea gravel, shredded tires or rubber mats and should be at least 12 inches deep.
- **Protrusion hazards**: Beware of hardware that is capable of impaling or cutting a child (bolts, hooks, rungs, etc.), or catching strings or items of clothing.
- **Head entrapment hazards**: There should be no openings that measure between 3 ½ and 9 inches.
- **Overcrowded play area**: Swings should be set far enough away from other equipment that children won’t be hit by a moving swing.
- **Lack of maintenance**: Metal or wooden swing seats should be replaced with soft seats, and equipment should not be split or splintered.
- **Sharp edges on equipment
- **Platforms with no guardrails
- **Equipment not recommended for public playgrounds**: One example is monkey bars. The number of injuries caused by monkey bars is so significant many experts recommend they be removed from all playgrounds.

Safety Tips
With active supervision and some basic safety tips, every day at the playground can be a walk in the park.

- Teach children that pushing, shoving or crowding while on the playground can be dangerous.
- Children should wear closed-toe shoes while playing and shouldn’t wear sweatshirts with drawstrings, scarves, or necklaces.
- Make sure the playground equipment is age-appropriate for your child.
- Children under age 4 shouldn’t play on climbing equipment or horizontal ladders.
- Check that playgrounds are inspected and maintained by qualified personnel.
- If the playground is unsafe, report the problem to the owner or park district.

Check out our course list online for a variety of safety trainings provided across the state at www.ndsc.org

The North Dakota Safety Council is a private non-profit organization supported through grants, donations, memberships and training.