

# RULE GUIDANCE

## Determining Appropriate Groundcover Depth

### GUIDANCE TOPIC

Determining appropriate groundcover depth in certified facilities.

### LICENSE TYPE AND RULES

#### Certified Family Child Care (CF)

OAR 414-350-0150(2)(a)

#### Certified Child Care Center (CC)

OAR 414-300-0150(3)(a)

### WHY THESE RULES ARE IN PLACE

To create a safe playground environment for all children and to reduce playground-related injuries.

### HOW THIS MAY LOOK IN YOUR PROGRAM

All stationary outdoor equipment of 18 inches or higher shall be installed over protective surfacing of an acceptable depth according to the standards of the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The critical height of equipment\* and the depth requirement is outlined below:

Type of Care	Critical height under 18 inches high	Critical height 18 inches to 4 feet high	Critical height 4 feet and higher
Centers	No ground cover required	9 inches compressed ground cover (12 inches fresh) OR 6 inches shredded or recycled rubber	9 inches compressed ground cover (12 inches fresh) OR 6 inches shredded or recycled rubber
Certified Family	No ground cover required	6 inches compressed ground cover (9 inches fresh) OR 6 inches shredded or recycled rubber	9 inches compressed ground cover (12 inches fresh) OR 6 inches shredded or recycled rubber

\*Critical Height is defined as the maximum height a child may climb, sit or stand.

Materials, also referred to as “loose fill,” acceptable to be used for surfacing include:

- Wood mulch, double shredded bark mulch, shredded/recycled rubber, engineered wood fiber, uniform wood chips, fine sand, course sand, pea gravel or rubber mats that meet ASTM F1292 standards.
- Engineered wood fiber is material that is made from the inside of trees-- not the bark. It is ground more finely than wood chips, having a consistency somewhere between woodchips and sawdust, and similar to shredded bark mulch.

Materials **not** acceptable to be used for surfacing include:

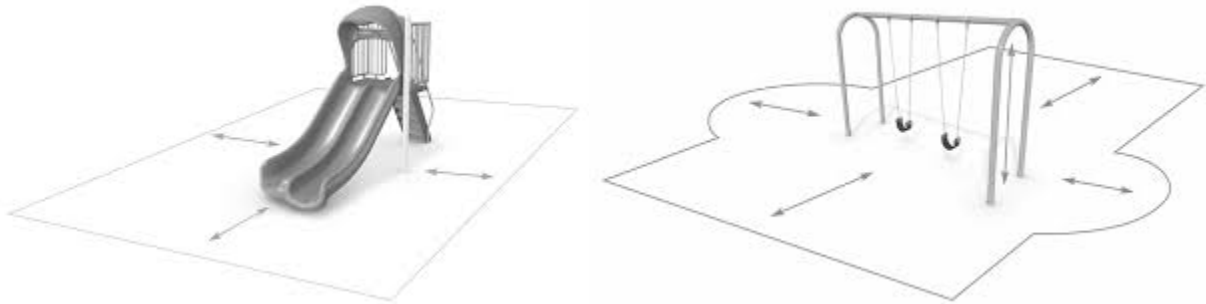
- Hog Fuel (a wood residue and waste product that is processed through a chipper or mill and produces course chips and clumps normally used for fuel) is **not** acceptable due to the irregularity of the chips and contents.
- Any loose-fill ground cover placed directly on concrete or asphalt.
- Horse stall mats or any type of rubber mats that do not meet ASTM F1292 standards.
- Grass or dirt.



## OCC LICENSING SPECIALIST MAY REVIEW

Groundcover depth will be measured at both monitoring visits and licensing visits.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



### Use Zone Requirements

The required “use zone” or surfacing under and around a piece of equipment is as follows:

- Stationary equipment: six feet in all directions.
- Single access swings that move forward and backward: extend protective surfacing in front and behind the swing distance of twice the height of the top bar from which the swing is suspended.
- Multi-access swings, such as tire swings that move in a circle: extend the surfacing in a circle equal to the height of the suspended chain or rope plus six feet in all directions.
- Surfacing around bucket swings and swings secured by a bar or strap and used by infants and toddlers are not required to extend more than six feet from the swing midpoint.

CPSC does not recommend using loose fill as ground cover for children under 36 months.

### Maintaining Loose-Fill Surfacing

Loose-fill surfacing materials require special maintenance to ensure they do not get compressed or displaced under high traffic areas such as swings and slide exits. The following are some suggestions on how to maintain the surfacing requirements:

- Monitor depths regularly by marking the required surfacing depths on equipment posts.
- Rake existing loose-fill surfacing back into place to ensure the proper depths are maintained.
- Place mats below or level with surfacing in high impact areas, such as under swings or at the base of the slide.
- Wet ground cover compresses faster than dry. If puddles are observed regularly, consider addressing drainage issues on the playground.
- The outside edge of the groundcover should have a border to keep it contained under the playground equipment.

## OPTIONAL RESOURCES

Certified Centers, Public Playground Safety Handbook, <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/325.pdf>

Certified Family, Home Playground Safety Handbook, <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/324.pdf>

Oregon Administrative Rules, Oregon Department of Education, Early Learning Division, Chapter 414, Divisions 300 [Certified Child Care Centers](#), and 350 [Certified Family Child Care Homes](#).

You are entitled to language assistance services and other accommodations at no cost. If you need help in your language or other accommodations, please contact the Office of Child Care at 503-947-1400.

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