

manager can take to make playground areas safer, says William C. Hoover, Department of Parks and Recreation, City of Charlottesville, Virg.

"It is my opinion that proper design, construction, inspection and maintenance are the key elements in providing a safe and enjoyable playground area," said Hoover at the 28th Virginia Turfgrass Conference.

Important construction considerations include a good drainage system, enclosing the area with a border that is at least eight to 10 feet away from any apparatus and increasing many of the manufacturer's installation recommendations. "We recommend increasing the amount of concrete and the size of holes dug for footing," says Hoover. "All footings should be a minimum of two inches below rough grade finish to avoid problems with the concrete protruding into the finished area."

There are many organic and inorganic materials you can use to provide a surface that offers a maximum cushioning effect. He recommends a combined depth of no less than 10 to 12 inches. "It has been our experience that the most effective surface materials are shredded rubber and pinebark mulch," says Hoover. "The shredded rubber is our best surface because it's safe, has good longevity and durability and is easy to maintain."

## Athletes prefer new turf

Researchers at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) say that the new cool-season turf varieties adapted to the Southwest climate provide better cushion and are therefore safer for athletes than existing varieties.

"Results from our study indicate that new perennial ryegrass varieties offer important safety features for football and baseball players, especially during the winter months when Bermudagrasses are dormant," says Stephen T. Cockerham, leader of UCR's sports turf research program.

UCR researchers tested 53 varieties during the four-year study. Citation II was reported to have performed the best under the stress of serious sports traffic, but not statistically better than eight other varieties.

"As improvements continue in the development of cool-season turfgrasses adaptable to the Southwest, sports field management will change dramatically," predicts Cockerham.

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