



## *NPCAI Partners with IPEMA for Discounts to Participate in NEW Online Safety Academy*

NPCAI members may participate at a discounted rate in a new online Safety Academy developed by the International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA) thanks to a new affiliation agreement between the two organizations. The NPCAI Board of Directors approved the affiliation agreement at its meeting in March.

The new online Safety Academy promotes playground safety knowledge and provides important relevant information related to the playground industry.

The first program is comprised of eight sessions and is geared primarily to individuals who work in the playground industry. Topics covered in the first Safety Academy program include:

- ◆ Compliance, definitions and technical specifications of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- ◆ Types, standards and maintenance of surfacing
- ◆ Age-appropriateness, maintenance, use zones and hazard identification of play equipment
- ◆ Laws and regulations
- ◆ Risk management



- ◆ Industry certification programs, affiliate organizations and an overview of the function and purpose of IPEMA

Sessions can be viewed in a quick, flexible, easy-to-navigate online platform. The program is mobile-friendly to tablets and phones and is easily accessible to web users. Participants who complete the full program receive a certificate. Future programs on additional topics are being developed for others who are interested in play.

IPEMA's Safety Academy launches during National Playground Safety Week, April 25-29. Three of the eight modules will be available during the last week in April with the other five released one at a time over the next few weeks.

For more information and to register, visit [www.ipema.org](http://www.ipema.org).

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## **NPCAI's Value Statements:**

- ✱ Build Trust & Demand Integrity
- ✱ Encourage Mastery & Deliver Excellence
- ✱ Professional & Accountable

[www.playground-contractors.org](http://www.playground-contractors.org)

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**National Recreation and Park  
Association Conference**

Oct 5-8, St. Louis, Mo.

# Get More Organized to Reduce the Stress of Spring

As we head into the busiest season of the year, I am tasked with making sure that all of our projects are handled with the utmost care and that no mistakes are made during their installation. I have learned over the years that there is a balance to spending my time designing and placing playground equipment with the client, ensuring that all items are ordered properly with regard to colors and roof pieces, and making sure that the installation process is planned out and organized in a flawless way. In a perfect

*It occurred to me that it would be impossible to ask my team to be more organized if I was not leading by example.*

world, there would be minimal mistakes, if any. Unfortunately, schedules are forced to be changed, and mistakes do occur.

This year, I have decided to get more organized so that I am ready for the busy season and my team is set up for the success that I envision. To do this, I had to develop a plan for success. As a leader

in my company, it is my responsibility to implement and develop a plan that is realistic and feasible.

It occurred to me that it would be impossible to ask my team to be more organized if I was not leading by example. To get more organized, I would have to make

some personal adjustments such as cleaning and organizing my materials that I take with me to job opportunity meetings and making sure that I set calendars for all of my tasks.

Here are a few of the organizational ideas that my company has adopted this spring as we head toward a busy and less stressful season:

- **Set calendars for everything and then USE the alert buttons** and check your calendar each morning as well as each evening for the next day. While it's easy to set a reminder to make a call or attend an event, following through and checking in on those calendar items will help to make sure that they actually occur. An electronic shared calendar works best for us since it enables me to log in and see where everybody is.
- **Clean up your work space.** Make sure you have a labeled IN box so that people know where to place items for your review. Then, keep up on what is placed there. You should also have supplies at the ready so that the flow of work does not stop throughout the day.
- **Set realistic goals.** Too often, I realize that the items I have to complete aren't even possible with the amount of time that I have to complete them. This is not a



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NPCAI's staff wants you to get the most out of your experience with NPCAI. We are available to serve you, so please do not hesitate to contact staff with any question or concern that you may have. For a full staff listing, please click [here](#).

facebook

"Like" NPCAI on Facebook to get association updates and interact with industry members.

LinkedIn

"Join" NPCAI on LinkedIn and ask questions of your fellow NPCAI members.

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## Letter from the Chair

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great way to start the day. It would be more effective to make sure that the task list is possible so that I can maintain a positive environment. Prioritize your priorities. Know what items have to be done today and what can wait until tomorrow. Go over the list several times a day, and keep it handy to add or take away tasks as needed.

- **At the end of each work day, take the time to update your priority list,** take off what was done and add what is new. This is a great way to feel accomplished each day.

I hope that these organizational tips are helpful to you and your business. I would like to hear about your projects so please feel free to reach out to me at any time.

I wish you all a very organized construction season!

*Kenda Daria*

*Chair, International Playground  
Contractors Association*

**Seeking  
Members  
to Profile**



NPCAI would like to begin featuring a member in each issue of this newsletter. Interested in being featured? It's easy and painless. Just email Amy at [editor@playground-contractors.org](mailto:editor@playground-contractors.org), and she'll send you a few questions to answer. Photos are also appreciated. We hope to hear from you soon!



# Play It Safe...

We know it's not just fun and games.

Online educational programs for individuals  
interested in playground safety.

ADA • Risk Management  
Laws & Regs • Surfacing • Equipment

[ipema.org](http://ipema.org)





# A NATURAL SHIFT

## *The Do's and Don'ts of Nature-Themed Play*

by Lisa Annis, Cre8Play

Humans love nature. Many of us were fortunate enough to have wooded areas to roam as kids, although many would argue that they are fewer and farther between today. Although some of our natural surroundings may go away, our desire for nature does not.

Cities and communities have found solutions in manufactured nature-themed options that bring back that feeling of the “great outdoors” both kids and adults love. But there’s a right way and a wrong way to approach a nature-themed environment. This article will help you compare the pros and cons as well as identify important considerations for finding the best nature-themed solutions.



### Realistic Products

When manufactured nature-themed play first arrived on the scene, many thought it was a trend that would be replaced by the next big idea. However, it remains one of the most sought-out themes in the industry, and it is clearly here to stay. Manufactured nature-themed play products and site amenities may have been rudimentary in design in the beginning, but years of research and development have greatly improved the detail, quality, durability and the ease of installation of nature-themed products.

“Our products are so realistic that our customers often comment that they do not look manufactured,” says Todd Lehman, owner of Cre8Play of Minneapolis, Minn., which





## Natural vs. Manufactured PROS/CONS:

TOP 8 Things to Consider	NATURAL: real logs,rocks	MANUFACTURER: post and platform	MANUFACTURER: specializing themed play
Liability on Installer	✓		
Low initial cost using existing materials	✓	✓	
Organic / Natural Textures & Style	✓		✓
Fun / Unique	✓		✓
Durability		✓	✓
Meets CPSC, ASTM Guidelines		✓	✓
Control of and Detail in Design			✓
Cost Effective over Time			✓

### A Natural Shift

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specializes in nature-themed custom play as well as individual products. His company has tested hundreds of formulas of concrete, building materials, processes, paint formulas and colors to achieve realistic and durable nature-themed qualities in equipment that is easy to install and built to last.

"We design play to make kids and adults feel like they're back in nature and not on a plastic play scape," he says. Specific texture and color detail can even be matched to the existing native landscape where the piece will be installed.



Cre8Play-built play products and structures are largely assembled at the factory so that they can be easily assembled during installation and do not require a lot of hardware post-delivery.

### Natural vs. Manufactured

So, why spend all this time and energy on manufacturing products? Why not just use a real tree, log or rock?

Clients or contractors may ask playground manufacturers to specify raw natural materials such as real logs, real trees, rocks from a quarry and other organic materials in play environments. Although using natural materials seems to

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# A Natural Shift

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make sense, the reality is that doing this brings risk and greater liability and in the long run is more costly.

Natural elements are simply not durable and do not meet the most basic CPSC and ASTM safety standards. Natural logs can disintegrate, and real rocks may be light enough for people to move them, thus contributing to risk and degradation over time.

An extensive amount of engineering and design is required to verify compliance to meet regulations.

## Contractor Considerations

Look to the following checklist when considering manufactured nature-themed play products.

- What is the manufacturer's experience in nature-themed play and site amenities? Has the manufacturer been in the business of nature-themed products from the very beginning? Look to number of years in nature-themed play business as well as number of projects/products sold during those years.
- How easy are the products to install? Are products assembled by the manufacturer or delivered in parts and pieces for the receiving end to deal with?
- What materials do they use? Is the material durable (such as GFRC, glass fiber and reinforced concrete) and made to withstand the elements, or will it fade, warp and require annual maintenance?



- Is the manufacturer interested in researching the place of installation? The manufacturer should be asking the right questions to learn more about the existing natural elements and native environment as well as the conditions and climate for the install.
- Does the manufacturer offer a complete line of products and services? Look for manufacturers that offer design and manufacturing that will see a project through from start to finish under one roof. For flexibility and options, use manufacturers that offer both existing products and custom work.

Cre8Play is a play design-manufacturer with an extensive nature-themed play offering including products, site amenities, custom play environments and art. The company also offers various other themed play such as sports, animal, farm, nautical, whimsical and whatever can be imagined. For more information on Cre8Play's nature-themed play, visit [www.cre8play/product](http://www.cre8play/product).

# Thank You to Our Premier Members

Membership in your professional trade association provides you and your company with numerous benefits. By becoming a Premier Member, you receive leadership support of the recreation installation industry with enhanced promotional advertising from NPCAI.

*Consider joining these Premier Members:*



*Playworld Systems, Inc.*



*Landscape Structures, Inc.*



*Custom Playgrounds, Inc.*



*Mid-Atlantic Products, Inc.*



*Premier Construction Corporation*



*Fry & Associates*



*GameTime*



*Playground Safety Services, Inc.*

## *The Benefits of Premier Membership*

Premier Members are considered the leaders in the recreation installation industry. Under this level of membership, Premier Members receive the following, in addition to their General Member benefits:

- An enhanced promotional advertising package from NPCAI via the website, in the newsletter and at NPCAI-sponsored events.
- Inclusion of your company logo and links in all NPCAI communication vehicles.
- One free registration to a Recreation Installation Specialist Certification (RISC) course held during the fiscal year in which the membership is paid.

Questions about Premier Membership should be directed to Angela Burkett at [membership@playground-contractors.org](mailto:membership@playground-contractors.org) or 717-234-0594.



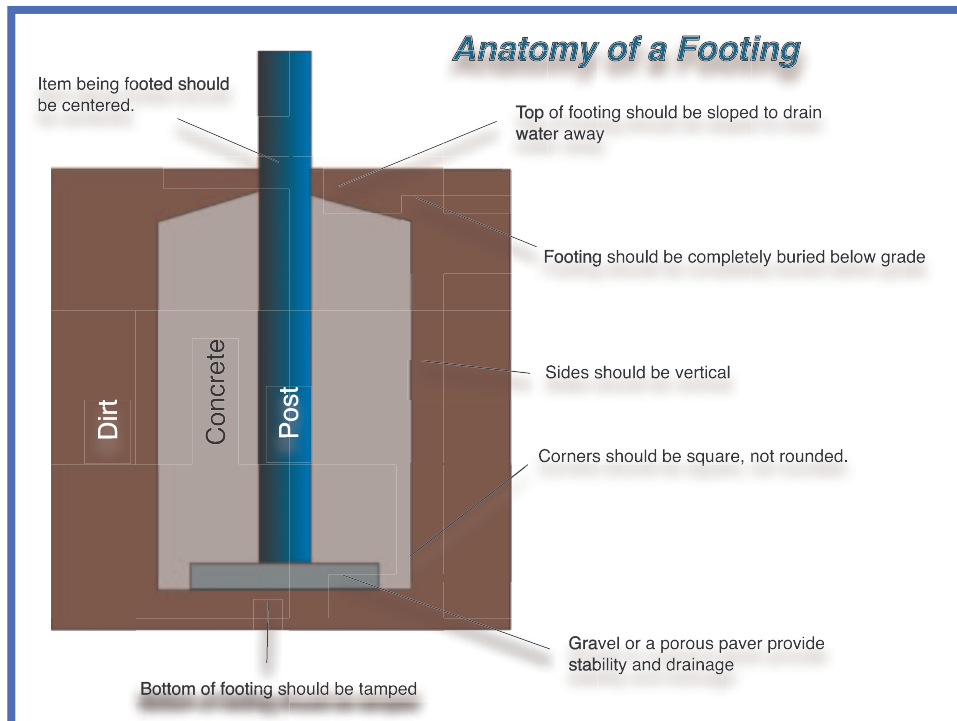
# Anatomy of a Footing

*Recreation Installation Specialist  
Certification (RISC) Excerpt*

As every playground installer knows, footings are a major part of the playground installation process. Whenever you dig into the ground, you are risking the possibility of opening a subterranean Pandora's Box. Rocky soil, sandy soil, swampy soil and a lack of soil all create unique challenges that could motivate an installer to deviate from the manufacturer's recommendations. That is never a good idea since a proper footing is a fundamental part of the installation process.

What is a proper footing? We have all seen the diagrams that a manufacturer supplies. What should we take note of?

**1. The item footed should be centered** – If a component is too far to the edge of the footing, it weakens the footing



considerably. The strength of the footing is the narrowest part of the concrete footer.

**2. The top of the footing should be sloped to drain water away** – If water does not drain away from the component, it will accelerate the aging of the item and possibly force water into the footing and crack it when it freezes.

**3. The footing should be completely buried below grade** – You never want a situation where the footing can be exposed if the surfacing breaks down or is displaced.

**4. Sides should be vertical** – Frost causes soil to expand and squeeze the footing; a curved side can allow the footing to shift in the ground.

**5. Corners should be square** – Curved edges not only expose the footing frost expansion, but they create a ball joint that allows the footing to shift in the ground

**6. Gravel or porous pavers provide stability and drainage** – Provide a firm base and an opportunity for water to drain from the component or post. A pipe completely encased in concrete can create water buildup and cause a rupture after a freeze.

**7. Bottom of footing should be tamped** – A stable, level base keeps the footing from shifting and distributes weight evenly into the ground, thus improving stability.

*Whenever you dig into the ground, you are risking the possibility of opening a subterranean Pandora's Box.*

**RISC school** is a vital part of becoming a professional installer. For more valuable tips and information, be sure to attend the RISC course in **Atlanta in December**.



# Association News



## Board Adopts Value Statements, Establishes Goals

The Board of Trustees affirmed its mission statement; brainstormed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the organization; and established value statements and set goals, during a strategic planning session held in March.

The Board affirmed the current mission statement:

*OUR MISSION: A worldwide partnership advancing the recreational construction industry by promoting qualified and dedicated contracting professionals who contribute to the design, installation and maintenance of parks, playgrounds, sports and recreation.*

The Board adopted the following value statements, which represent the core philosophy of the organization:

- Build Trust and Demand Integrity
- Encourage Mastery and Deliver Excellence
- Professional and Accountable

The Board also developed and prioritized the following goals:

1. Develop and launch a new website by March 2017.
2. Assess and develop a revised RISC course to incorporate tiers to target audiences, review delivery

options and consider a hands-on component by June 2017.

3. Pursue including RISK in ASTM standard 1487 by November 2017.
4. Develop a plan to reach out to specifiers by June 2017.
5. Develop a public relations plan to various audiences by October 2016.
6. Develop and pursue partnerships with NRPA and others (international and national) by December 2017.
7. Improve financial situation of organization by having a reserve of \$25,000 by June 2017.
8. Add a third RISC training opportunity in 2017.
9. Continue offering educational opportunities by December 2017.

The following items were not prioritized by the Board but listed as important goals for the organization:

- Review member categories in June 2017.
- Increase membership to 220 by October 2017.
- Increase the number of training instructors (possibly bilingual individuals) by July 2017.
- Expand committee membership in 2017.
- Continue to improve regular member communications.

- Work with other organizations to promote multigenerational play by December 2017.
- Promote NPCAI's insurance programs.

*See photos of meeting on next page.*

## NPCAI Member Stats at a Glance

**116** General Members

**74** Qualified Contractor

**3** Premier Members

**5** Premier Qualified Contractor

**84** Percentage member retention rate

## Committee Updates

**Communications** – Working on a redesign of the website, which is a priority of the association.

**Education** – Developed a site drainage flyer for distribution. Plan to hold the annual conference the second week of December 2016.

**Membership** – Current retention rate is 84 percent with 18 new members the first quarter of the year.

**RISC** – 72 individuals took the exam last year. Materials are being translated into Spanish. Discussed adding a third course to the annual training schedule in 2017.

## Association News

### Could Your Company Use Some More Promotion? *Become a Premier Member with NPCAI*

By becoming a Premier Member, you receive the leadership support of the recreation installation industry with enhanced promotional advertising from NPCAI. In addition to all the general member benefits, you receive the following:



- Company logo posted in the newsletter
- Company listed as a Premier Member on the website
- Complimentary RISC registration for one person (\$495 value)

### *Welcome, New Members!*

The following new members have joined NPCAI between Jan. 12 and March 6. Please help in welcoming these companies to our membership.

#### **GENERAL MEMBERS**

**ACS Playground  
Adventures, Inc.**

Oklahoma City, Okla.

**Kompan Playgrounds**

Tacoma, Wash.

**Zasueta Contracting, Inc.**

Spring Valley, Calif.

#### **QUALIFIED CONTRACTORS**

**Great Lakes Recreation  
Company**

Zeeland, Mich.

**Rocky Mt. Turf & Play**

Plain City, Utah



The NPCAI Board of Trustees held a strategic planning session in March at NPCAI headquarters in Pennsylvania.



Board members prioritize goals during strategic planning.



Executive Director Denise Calabrese and Trustee David Dayton (Icon Shelter Systems)



Trustee Tom Norquist (GameTime) and President of the Board of Trustees Kenda Daria (Safe and Sound Playgrounds)



# Featured Playground

## Stars & Stripes Drive-In Theater New Braunfels, Texas

Sent in by *Carmen Soileau*, [No Fault Sport Group](#)

Drive-in theater patrons in New Braunfels, Texas, can now enjoy snacks and a movie while their children play on a beautiful new playground, provided by **No Fault Sport Group** and **Recreation Consultants of Texas (RCT)**. The playground is a unique and enjoyable addition to the 1950s-themed drive-in movie experience at Stars & Stripes Drive-In Theater.

RCT provided the colorful and creative playground equipment, and No Fault Safety Surface covers more than 3,700 square feet. The owners of the drive-in theater wanted a play area that would be unique and exciting.

"They wanted it to be a 'destination playground' so that the children would want to come back to play at the theater," says Tracey Edgar with RCT. "They actually open an hour



early so kids can play before the movie starts."

The owners kept their own daughters in mind when designing the playground, Edgar says.

"They never hesitated as to what type of playground surfacing they wanted," she continues. "They knew they wanted unitary rubber surfacing all along to ensure the safety of the children."

The blue colors for the No Fault Safety Surface were chosen to complement the playground equipment, as well as the client's '50s café color scheme.

[Click here](#) for more information on No Fault Safety Surface.

*We want to see your playgrounds! If you are interested in submitting your playground for consideration as a Featured Playground, please email Amy at [editor@playgroundcontractors.org](mailto:editor@playgroundcontractors.org) and include the following: one photo; project name and location; and company name, location and website.*





# INDUSTRY NEWS

## Products Containing BPA Must Have Warning, Under California's Proposition 65

Manufacturers, distributors and retailers in California have until May 11 to implement "clear and reasonable" warnings that Bisphenol A (BPA) is known to cause birth defects or other reproductive harm.

Unless the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) establishes a "safe harbor" level, businesses that produce, distribute or sell products in California that may expose the public to BPA should prepare to provide Prop 65 warnings for such products or face potential litigation and penalties when the grace period expires May 11, 2016.

BPA can be found in products such as clear window panels that contain polycarbonate.

Proposition 65 requires the state of California to maintain and update a list of chemicals known to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity.

## Americans Cherish Local Parks and Rec, Study Finds

Americans cherish their local public park and recreation services, seeing them as valuable features of their communities, towns and cities.

In fact, Americans almost unanimously agree that their communities benefit from their local public parks, *even if they themselves are not regular park users.*

This passion for local public parks has gone unabated during the past 25 years even as our nation and the ways we interact and entertain each other have dramatically evolved.

[Click here](#) to read about this NRPA report.

## Voice of Play Explores Play Trends

With the "always-on," stressed-out life that everyone seems to lead these days, time for free, outdoor play has never been more important to de-stress and decompress — for kids and their parents. In a recently released report, PLAYful Trends 2016, the International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association's (IPEMA) the Voice of Play identified eight of the hottest trends in play.

They are:

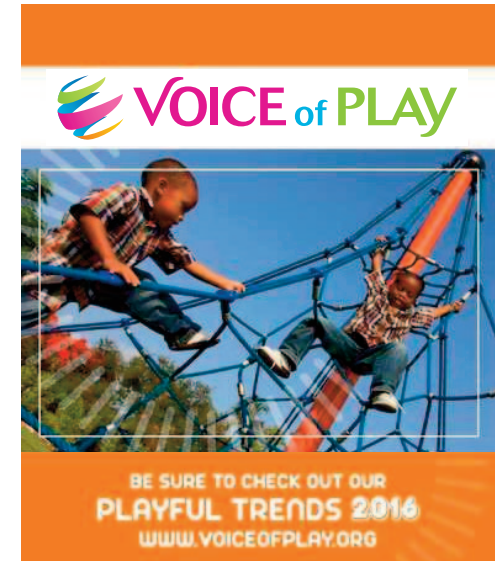
1. An hour a day
2. Made to move
3. Beyond childhood
4. It's better outside
5. Back to nature
6. All inclusive
7. Taking chances
8. Mind expanding

[Click here](#) to read the entire report.

## Celebrate Park and Recreation Month in July

Help communities discover their super powers at their local parks during Park and Recreation Month in July. To help you spread the word, the NRPA has a toolkit, which includes a promotional poster and graphics.

[Click here](#) to go to the toolkit.





# INDUSTRY NEWS

## Snapshots from the Conference on Play



Play advocates gathered April 3-6 at Clemson University for the 2016 Play Conference "Rebooting Play." Conference speakers discussed play deficit disorder, the free-range kid movement, Nickelodeon's Worldwide Day of Play and ways to reconnect African Americans with outdoor recreational activities. There was also plenty of time for play!



## International Playground Contractors Association



*OUR MISSION: A worldwide partnership advancing the recreational construction industry by promoting qualified and dedicated contracting professionals who contribute to the design, installation and maintenance of parks, playgrounds, sports and recreation environments.*

The Playground Insider is an e-newsletter for members of the International Playground Contractors Association (NPCAI). It is published electronically four times per year:

Winter issue is published in January.  
Spring issue is published in April.  
Summer issue is published in July.  
Fall issue is published in October.

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## Articles Wanted

NPCAI is on the lookout for articles for this newsletter. Articles (200-500 words; photos welcome) can be about an industry hot topic, a unique project or news about your company's community involvement, honor or award. The deadline to submit for the **Summer 2016** issue (published in July) is **Friday, June 10**.

Email articles to Amy at [editor@playground-contractors.org](mailto:editor@playground-contractors.org).

## NPCAI's Website Advertising

Advertise on NPCAI's website and reach more than 200 NPCAI members as well as related industry leaders, parks and recreation directors, city planners, architects, boards of education and playground manufacturers.

### 2016 ADVERTISING RATES

#### SIZE:

Full-Banner Ads (468 x 60 pixel)  
Vertical-Tower Ads (160 x 600 pixel)

#### COST:

2-week ad run: 10,000 impressions \$400  
1-month ad run: 20,000 impressions \$800  
6-month ad run: 120,000 impressions \$4,800

The industry-wide unit used to set pricing for banner ads is "CPM," which stands for cost per thousand impressions. You pay 4 cents every time your banner ad is displayed on the NPCAI website regardless of how many times your banner ad is clicked on. In a one-month period, the NPCAI website gets a little more than 20,000 impressions.

For more information about the advertising program, contact [communications@playground-contractors.org](mailto:communications@playground-contractors.org).