

ISO and IPEMA Certifications

CPSC, ASTM and ADA are familiar acronyms to parks and recreation professionals and playground designers. Recently, however, additional terms have joined the playground equipment industry's vocabulary: ISO and IPEMA.

ISO is a quality standard that certifies the *processes* by which a manufacturer designs and produces its product, but it does not extend its quality certification to the products themselves.

IPEMA is an industry association that provides a third party certification service that validates a products' conformance with the ASTM standard through a third party validator – Detroit Testing Labs.

Both can provide important information when you are making purchase decisions for new play equipment.

ISO: auditing quality processes

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), based in Geneva, Switzerland, was founded in 1946 and comprises technical bodies from 100 countries, including the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

In 1987, the organization published a series of standards for quality management systems. Here's what the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology has to say about these quality standards:

"The ISO 9000 standards were intended to be advisory in nature and were developed primarily for use in two-party contractual situations or for internal auditing. However, the standards are currently being applied under a much broader range of conditions and circumstances. In some cases, compliance with one of the ISO 9000 standards (or their equivalent) has been or will be mandated by a U.S., foreign national, or regional government body. Conformance to



"You should determine what level of compliance is important to you."

ISO 9000 standards is also being required in purchasing specifications with increasing frequency."

ISO 9001 is the most comprehensive standard—and the most difficult to achieve. It encompasses quality systems for production, installation, inspection and testing. But it adds three more elements: design, development and servicing. These processes are especially important for play equipment.

In 1996, the International Standards Organization finalized the ISO 14000 standards for environmental management.

ISO 14001 is a set of internationally recognized voluntary standards that govern a company's environmental management systems. ISO 14001 Certification establishes the highest level of corporate commitment to the prevention of pollution and fosters a culture of environmentally responsible practices. Landscape Structures is the first and only North American playground manufacturer to have achieved this certification.

When writing specifications for your next playground equipment purchases, you may want to require that manufacturers supply evidence of ISO certification. You should also determine what level of compliance is important to you—9001 and/or 14001.

IPEMA: certifying product safety

IPEMA, or The International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association, is an organization made up of more than 50 manufacturers of playground equipment and surfacing. It was founded in 1995 as an outgrowth of the National School Supply and Equipment Association, which has provided its members with information on economic, safety and governmental issues for more than 30 years.



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In the interest of playground safety, IPEMA has developed a third-party certification program that validates a manufacturer's certification to the current ASTM F1487 safety standard for public-use playground equipment. The goal of the IPEMA program is to inform and assure the purchaser of public playground equipment that certified products conform to ASTM safety standards.

The ASTM F1487 standard, entitled "Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use," and the ASTM F1292 standard, entitled "Standard Specification for Impact Attenuation of Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment," outlines voluntary technical standards for manufacturers of playground equipment and surfacing. Each of these standards includes specifications for materials and manufacturing, performance for products and test methods. Both standards are evaluated at least annually and updated as necessary.

Validated equipment that meets ASTM requirements receives an IPEMA Certification logo. When you see the logo, it means the associated equipment conforms to the ASTM standard—and, by extension, most of the CPSC guidelines. For complete information about the IPEMA Certification Program go to www.ipema.org.

ISO and IPEMA: working for you

Together, ISO and IPEMA certifications can help play equipment purchasers make good decisions by providing information about

ISO 9001 audit criteria

The following quality management activities are reviewed by an independent agency during the stringent ISO 9001 certification audit:

- Management responsibility
- Quality system
- Contract review
- Design control
- Document control
- Purchasing
- Purchaser-supplied products
- Product identification and traceability
- Process control
- Inspection and testing
- Control of nonconforming product
- Corrective and preventive action
- Handling, storage, packaging and delivery
- Quality records
- Internal quality audits
- Training
- Servicing
- Statistical techniques

In addition to ASTM, which is a U.S. standard, playground equipment products are subject to many other safety standards around the world. These standards include:

- European Standards
EN-1176, Parts 1-7
- CAN/CSA-Z614 in Canada

(Landscape Structures' products conform to virtually all the above standards.)

both the quality the processes in place at the manufacturer, and that the finished products meet today's industry safety standards.

For information about a manufacturer's ISO status, you can check their printed material or ask your sales representative. (Landscape Structures Inc. was ISO 9001 certified in 1996, and was the first U.S. manufacturer in the play equipment industry to achieve this certification. The company was ISO 14001 certified in 1998.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

IPEMA maintains a complete directory of certified products, listed by manufacturer, on a World Wide Web site at <http://www.ipema.org>

ISO Online The International Organization for Standardization maintains a comprehensive Web site at www.iso.ch.

ASTM Standard F1487 and F1292

The *Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use* and the ASTM F1292 standard entitled "*Standard Specification for Impact Attenuation of Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment*," are essential reading for anyone who designs playgrounds or specifies outdoor play equipment. You can obtain these documents from your Landscape Structures representative or from the American Society for Testing & Materials at:
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610-832-9500
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