

Child loses toe on city park slide Playground passes inspection despite 'big rusty hole' that cut it off

Published: May 4, 1999

Source: Winnipeg Free Press

A FOUR-YEAR-OLD girl lost a toe on a city park slide that had been inspected for safety just four days before the accident.

Nikita Alexander's left baby toe was sliced off as the child rode down a slide at Helen Promislow Park near Salter Street and Kingsbury Avenue on Friday.

"It was one of those old metal ones and it had a big rusty hole in it but I didn't see it," Cathy Alexander, Nikita's mom, said yesterday.

She said that after the accident, she grabbed her daughter and ran for her car. "I panicked. My stomach is turning just talking about it," the shaken mother said.

Minutes after the accident, Alexander said she had her daughter at Children's Hospital and two plastic surgeons were called in to operate.

The missing toe was later found wedged in a hole that measured 10 centimetres long by about four cm wide in the railing of the slide.

"The parks guy found it in the slide and he put it in a plastic bag and took it to the hospital but it was too late. They weren't able to reattach it," Alexander said.

The slide was boarded up soon after the hospital reported the accident to the city. Yesterday it was removed from the park.

City asks parents to report park problems

"It's a very, very unfortunate accident," said Bob McDonald, spokesman for the city's public works department, which is in charge of public parks.

The city's 390 playgrounds are inspected by safety officers every seven to 10 working days; Helen Promislow Park was last checked out April 27, just four days before the accident.

Nothing wrong was noted in the report.

City officials can't explain how an inspector missed the rusty hole, or even if it was apparent when the park was checked.

Playground accidents are the leading cause of serious children's injuries in Manitoba, according to a study that counted 392 accidents in one year involving children under 16.

Half of all the accidents result in broken or dislocated bones, concluded the 1993

University of Manitoba study by orthopedic surgeons Brian Black and Norman Klippenstein.

An average of seven children a week are brought to Children's Hospital emergency department after accidents on playgrounds, and one or two are typically admitted to hospital, according to the Injury Prevention Centre at the hospital.

City officials are urging parents who spot a problem in a park or a flaw on playground equipment to report it to the city's consumer line at 986-7623.