

Local authorities (municipalities)
Provincial State Offices
Owners and maintainers of traditional big swings
Organizations financing construction of traditional big swings

The Finnish Consumer Agency's safety guidelines on traditional big swings

1. General

A traditional big swing has a long seat board suspended on stiff wooden poles. These kind of swings are activities which, when supplied to consumers, are subject to the provisions in the Act on the Safety of Consumer Products and Services (75/2004), regardless of whether users are charged for the service. A traditional swing may not present a risk to a consumers' safety (Section 3 of the Act on the Safety of Consumer Products and Services).

The Finnish Consumer Agency has defined accurate requirements for traditional big swings. On the 16th of May 2006, the Consumer Agency prohibited the use of a particular swing if safety requirements are not met. The Consumer Agency also ordered the service provider to take measures to prevent the use of the swing in a way that presents a risk to consumers' safety. The Consumer Agency expects the swing remain locked whenever requirements for its safe use cannot be met.

2. Risks presented by traditional swings

Regardless of size, a traditional swing's kinetic energy can become very high, because the seat board weights a lot and several persons may be on the swing at the same time. As this is an activity that is very appealing to children, the location of a swing has significance for the risks involved (proximity to day-care centres, schools and other places intended for children and young people or where there are lots of children).

Traditional big swings present, among others, the following risks:

The risk of being hit by the seat board when

- a bystander (particularly a child) passes within the swing's arc
- someone falls off the swing
- a person standing on the ground gives more speed to the others on the seat board.

The risk of falling off the swing if

- the area under the swing is of some other than shock-absorbing material (for example gravel or concrete), the amount of shock-absorbing material is insufficient or there are rocks, stumps, sharp edges etc. in the falling area
- people stand while swinging
- there are no adequate places to hold on to (poles are too thick for holding on with hands).

3. Expert statement by the National Board of Antiquities

The Finnish Consumer Agency inquired the National Board of Antiquities for an expert statement on traditional big swings' safety. The National Board of Antiquities noted in its statement that swings have caused deaths since the middle of the 18th century. Deaths have mainly resulted from falling off the swings, although traditional big swings were intended only for adults.

In the 19th century in Ingria parents forbade the use of these swings except at Easter, because big swings were known to be dangerous. In spite of this, young men continued to build such swings. Fathers, however, used to destroy swings at night, because accidents caused by big swings often resulted in serious physical injuries and even deaths.

The National Board of Antiquities owns two traditional swings, which are located at the Seurasaari open-air museum in Helsinki. Both of these swings have been locked for years and are not in use.

4. Minimum safety requirements for traditional swings' structures and use

Up to now there have not been detailed safety requirements for traditional big swings. In evaluating the safety of village swings the Finnish Consumer Agency has applied standards EN 1176-1: *Playground equipment. Part 1: General safety requirements and test methods* and EN 1176-2: *Playground equipment. Part 2: Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for swings*.

In evaluating the risks presented by swings the Consumer Agency has come to the conclusion that swings present such risks that their use can only be allowed if certain safety requirements are met. The minimum requirements are that

- technically a swing must not be able to turn all the way around its axis
- a shock-absorbing material such as sand must cover a large enough area under the swing and to a sufficient depth and the falling area must be free of rocks, stumps, sharp edges or other such materials that could hurt someone falling off the swing
- only persons over the age of 18 are allowed to use the swing and
- a swing can only be used under the supervision of a qualified person (representative of the service provider, supervisor). This person particularly keep children from using the swing or coming within reach of it and know what to do in a case of an emergency or an accident.

Otherwise the use of the swing must be prevented, for example by locking the swing. If consumers in some other way can use the swing, it will be regarded as presenting a risk to consumers' health as prescribed in Section 6 of the Act on the Safety of Consumer Products and Services.

5. Surveillance practice is based on

- the Act on the Safety of Consumer Products and Services (75/2004)
- standards EN 1176-1: Playground equipment. Part 1: General safety requirements and test methods and EN 1176-2: Playground equipment. Part 2: Additional specific safety requirements and test methods for swings
- the decision issued by the Consumer Agency on the 16th of May 2006.

6. Complying with surveillance practice

The business or other service provider is responsible for the safety of swing users and bystanders. The Act on the Safety of Consumer Products and Services requires service providers to observe sufficient care. A service provider must also report to the authorities if a swing is observed to present a risk to consumers' health.

This surveillance practice must be complied with immediately. The Finnish Consumer Agency will issue a press release on the matter.

The control authorities mentioned in the Act on the Safety of Consumer Products and Services (the Finnish Consumer Agency, the Provincial State Offices and local authorities) will monitor compliance with this surveillance practice.

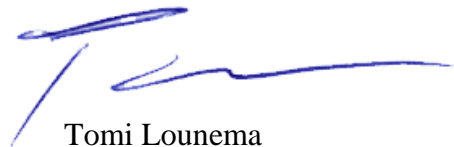
Organizations financing construction of traditional big swings are urged to take this surveillance practice into consideration.

Director General



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Director



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Appendix Photo of traditional big swing

Distribution The Finnish Consumer Agency's website
 Local authorities (municipalities)
 Provincial State Offices
 National Board of Antiquities
 Accident Investigation Board
 Ministry of the Interior/Department of Rescue Services
 Employment and Economic Development Centres