



## **Kids & Construction (Bad Mix)**



*About four in the afternoon, millions and millions of young boys and girls descend on the nearest construction site, a child's vision of the Biggest Playground in America. But it's the most dangerous playground in the world.*

**Do you have NO TRESPASSING** signs posted on all sides of your construction site? How about a dozen or so signs saying DANGER . . . KEEP OUT?

**Do you enforce what these signs say?** Do you have a nighttime guard on-site to prevent vandalism . . . to prevent trespassers . . . to prevent young children from coming onto your site where there are a hundred and one hazards that can injure them severely?

**You might even want to post a sign** that says PLAYGROUND CLOSED FOR THE SEASON. The CONSTRUCTION SEASON, that is.

**What are some of these hazards** that entice youngsters onto our jobsites?

What about this list of **America's Ten Most Dangerous Hazards:**

- **Basement Foundation Walls** – It's tempting for a youngster to stand on the edge of any foundation wall. Sorta like playing "King of the Mountain."
- **Floor Openings** – What's down there in that big pit? Probably hobgoblins like we see on Halloween!
- **Unshored Trenches** – In the winter, they like to slide down snowbanks. Why not slide down that trench wall . . . that'd be tons of fun.
- **Vaults & Pits** – Maybe that would be like playing Hide-n-Seek. But can they get back out of that big dark pit, that's maybe filled with water and muck?
- **Gasoline Cans** – If someone has a Bic Lighter, maybe we can see if we can start a fire in that dumpster filled with debris.
- **Cabs of Excavators** – boys and even girls like to imagine themselves as drivers of cars at the Indy 500. Now if there is a key in the ignition, we'll really have fun.
- **Vandalism** – When all else fails, vandalizing equipment and tools is a lot of fun. If we can get that brake released, we can roll down the embankment onto the highway. WHEEE!!!
- **Roof Tops** – What's better than a child's treehouse? A roof top, that's what. And it's higher too. Maybe twenty to thirty feet?
- **Climbing Rafters** – Climbing through trusses and rafters is sorta like the jungle maze at the playground.
- **Splitting Open Bags of Cement** – Tossing hands-full of dry cement at each other is a little like a sand battle at the beach.
- **Man Holes Not Capped** – Ever want to descend down into the Black Hole of Calcutta, only spookier.
- **Ladders are to Climb** – A forty-foot extension ladder will put us on the top of the world. But how do I get back down? Maybe my parents will have to call the Fire Department, and they'll send a big, red Hook & Ladder Truck.

- **Scaffolding** – Looks like the monkey bars at the playground. And we can race to see who can climb the highest.
- **Shoveling Sand into Gas Tanks** – Wonder how many shovels of sand we can pour into the gas tank of this excavator? You do this truck, and I'll do the front-end loader.
- **Hey, Here's a Key in the Forklift** – Let's see how far we can drive this monster around in circles. Race you to the dumpster!

**Now the Scenario we've just outlined** above was perhaps typical of what happens on any number of construction sites around the country. And since it usually happens just after school closes, it probably doesn't cover more than an hour.

**In the one one-hour timeframe**, we listed fifteen possible "fun & games" committed by five children, probably between the ages of seven and ten. Few, if any, of the above listed activities were deemed by these youngsters to be vandalism. They (the children) weren't being mean-spirited, they were "just having fun."

**Here's what this "having fun" might have cost** in terms of injury; burns, exposure to solvents, broken bones, damaged equipment, civil suits, doctors' bills, legal fees, repair bills and time spent to repair the goodwill of the community where this one-hour of fun and games occurred:

<p style="text-align: center;">Time Interval (One-Hour)          Number of Participants (Five)          Ages of Participants (Seven to Ten)          Broken Bones (Four)          Fractures (Two)          Bleeding Victims (Four)          Eye Sight Damaged (Two)          Exposure to Solvents/Burns (Two)          Hospital Stays (In days – 15)          Adults Traumatized (28 – including Grandparents)          Days of School Lost (40)          Legal Fees (\$500,000 and counting)          Equipment Damage/Repair (\$400,000)          Cost of Rental/Replacement Equipment (\$225,000)</p>
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**Would a dozen DANGER signs** have prevented all of this misery? Would a dozen signs saying KEEP OUT help? We don't have the answer, but we do believe that construction site activities are a magnet to little children, and a sign or two can't do any harm.

**What we all need, perhaps**, is a heightened awareness of the amount of liability that exists on jobsites, not to the workers, but to the non-workers, the kids, the citizens, the teenagers, and to outsiders that think a construction job-site is fair game to anyone that wants to come on site and play, play, play.

*Before a jobsite begins, site owners need to give some consideration to site security. Fencing signage, guards, drive-by surveillance, etc. Put this into your site game plan.*