



ASCIP *RISK ALERT!*

Date: January 27, 1999

Attention: ASCIP Members

Subject: ANCHORING BENCHES AND PLANTER BOXES

Recently, in a Laguna Niguel, California, public park, an 8 year old boy was crushed to death when the 600-800 lb cast concrete bench on which he and several other children were playing overturned on top of him. Media reports state that while the park is owned by the City and had 2 benches, about 38 similar park benches were believed to have been installed city-wide by a private contractor on behalf of a residential developer as part of the master plan for this area. The City reportedly assumed ownership of the park property and its improvements without knowledge of any potential hazard related to the benches.

Subsequent investigation revealed that the benches in this park may not have been fastened to their concrete base pads and remained upright in place due to sheer mass and weight. Following this accident, City officials advised that all benches which were not anchored would be removed. While first thought that there was not requirement to anchor these massive concrete castings, later information revealed that the manufacturer of the benches recommends anchorage and noted that the benches were provided with a feature by which they could be attached to their mounting pads by steel dowels.

ASCIP staff has viewed many different types and styles of cast concrete benches, planter boxes, and other massive indoor and outdoor furniture on our member's campuses and in their administration facilities. A significant number of these outdoor installations exhibit evidence of use by skateboarders as launching ramps or present attractive edge or rail surfing opportunities which may shift the weight distribution of the object and overturn it. Where schools have joint use agreements with adjoining public park property, pupils may play upon these installations and may risk an overturning accident similar to that described. Additionally, in a seismic event, heavy objects are known to "walk" considerable distances or overturn with the potential risk of serious injury or death.

ASCIP recommends that each member Agency review the need to inspect and anchor each bench, planter box, or other object where the potential for overturning or seismic movement is observed. Where the manufacturer provides an anchorage system or specific anchorage recommendations, those methods and materials should be utilized. In situations where no information is available or where no anchorage materials have been designated, it may be appropriate to retain an engineering professional to develop a suitable restraint system. Should any member have a specific concern regarding this issue, or need assistance in developing resources to address such problems, please feel free to give ASCIP a call at any time.

Reviewed July, 2006