



November 27, 2024

TRANSMITTED VIA EMAIL

Mr. Benjamin Shirley
ASTM International
100 Barr Harbor Dr.
West Conshohocken, PA 19428-2959

Re: ASTM Ballot F14 (24-03), Item 5, for Reapproval of F2049-2011(2017) *Safety Performance Specification for Fences/Barriers for Public, Commercial, and Multi-Family Residential Use Outdoor Play Areas*

Dear Mr. Shirley:

This letter is the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) staff's¹ response to ballot Item 5 from the ASTM F14 (24-03) ballot pertaining to playground fencing requirements. The ballot item (work item WK92625) would revise ASTM F2049-2011 (2017) by converting the document from a safety performance specification to a guide.² In other words, the ballot item proposes to reduce the standard from a set of safety requirements addressing fencing strength, child containment, and laceration hazards into a series of recommendations. Specifically, mandatory language has been deleted from the title and body of the document including "Performance Specification," "recommended minimum requirements," "requirements," and the ballot also proposes changing instances of "shall" to "should." Staff votes negative on this ballot item with the following comments.

In January and August of 2022, CPSC staff expressed support for reapproving ASTM F2049-11 as a safety specification rather than converting the standard into a guidance document. Staff's position continues to be in favor of keeping F2049 as a safety performance specification rather than a guidance document. Our rationale is that the CPSC *Public Playground Safety Handbook (Handbook)* cites ASTM F2049-11, recommending the use of fencing that conforms to local building codes and/or ASTM F2049-11 as a method to contain children within a playground where nearby accessible hazards such as lakes and road traffic pose a hazard to children.³

ASTM F2049-11 currently contains fencing requirements that protect children by taking into consideration anthropometric and developmental characteristics of children under twelve and accordingly limits spacing, size, and location of fence components to preclude a child from climbing

¹ The views expressed in this letter are those of CPSC staff and have not been reviewed or approved by, and may not necessarily reflect the views of, the Commission.

² Per the ASTM Form and Style Guide, a specification is "an explicit set of requirements," while a guide is "a compendium of information or series of options that does not recommend a specific course of action."

³ Section 2. General Playground Considerations of (2010) CPSC *Public Playground Safety Handbook*. Retrieved from: [Public Playground Safety Handbook | CPSC.gov](https://www.cpsc.gov/Document-Search/Public-Playground-Safety-Handbook)



over, passing through, or becoming entrapped on fence components. Even U.S. states that are not required to follow the *Handbook* may still rely on F2049 to provide the dimensions and specifications needed for building safe fences. Additionally, the Significance and Use section of the standard currently states that this specification is “for use in local codes and ordinances relating to public, multi-family, residential, and commercial outdoor play areas or zones and their environment.” This standard is the established framework for evaluating the risk to vulnerable locations around which playground fencing shall be placed. Changing the requirements to recommendations would undermine the above-referenced instances of reliance on the standard to advance that goal. It also would create challenges for jurisdictions that seek to incorporate the standard in the future, as arguments are likely to arise that the standard should not be relied upon because it is no longer a specification.

Staff’s understanding of the rationale for the proposed changes is that this existing framework has lost consensus. However, reducing the entire standard to a guide is not an effective solution to this problem, and staff is concerned that the changes will result in a reduction in safety to playground fencing. Rather than move forward with the proposed changes, staff recommends the subcommittee form a task group to develop requirements and recommendations that more comprehensively allow users of the standard to evaluate the risk to vulnerable locations and take appropriate action. Staff stands by to assist in such an effort.

Staff thanks the subcommittee for its consideration of this negative and looks forward to working together to improve the safety of playground fencing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Khalisa Phillips', with a long, sweeping underline.

Khalisa Phillips, Ph.D., CPSI
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