

New kid on the skate park block



The long awaited and widely welcomed safety standard for making and installing skateboard parks is now published by the BSI, called "BS EN 14974:2006, Facilities for users of roller sports equipment - Safety requirements and test methods"

In this standard, 'roller sports' includes: inline skates, roller skates, skateboards, other similar roller sports equipment and BMX bikes. It details requirements and test methods. It covers: safety requirements (for design, construction and safety zones), materials, testing, marking and user information.

This brings to skaters, boarders and BMXers park design which should improve enjoyment and challenge while minimising risks from poor design, construction or installation. API member and skate park maker, Playdale's Paul Mallinson, said "For manufacturers, this creates a 'level playing field' and EU export opportunities. We involved bikers and skaters in our working group. They were very positive. Now UK local authorities and other skate park providers can specify compliance with this new standard. That is good news for skaters and bikers, for all providers and their insurers as it helps minimise avoidable risk."

Roller sports are intrinsically high risk as fellow API member, Chris Dodd of Playground Services explained "The standard aims to remove unnecessary hazards due to poor design, construction and installation. It will mean a better sport and ride experience for UK skaters and bikers." BS EN 14974 is available from www.bsi-global.com. The new standard is also welcomed by RPII-registered safety inspectors at www.playinspectors.com. They now have a standard to help assess safety and compliance.

This new standard replaces the previous British guideline-only, PAS 35:2002 and the European standard, DIN 33943. It incorporates the best of both and goes further. It has design differences for alternative construction materials and, with techniques developed for safety in playground equipment design, avoids toggle traps and head entrapment. It also means API members who supply and install equipment in skate and bike parks, as a condition of API membership and being listed at www.api-play.org, must now demonstrate tested and certified product compliance with BS EN 14974 - a benefit to their customers.

Skaters and bikers will immediately spot adequate space around and optimised distances between pieces of equipment to give great sport and excellent rides with intrinsic but undiminished risks which add the thrills and safer spills. This should win skateboarders' interest away from city centre street furniture as it will offer so much more scope, fun and safety from non sport associated hazards. That means space and scope for stunts and tricks in better purpose built areas. For competent users and novices these informed design safety standards are planned to offer a great experience at every skill level in unsupervised local parks. For high end competition and exhibition equipment, the extreme end of these sports, these standards are not applicable. For local authority free-to-use public parks and in paid-for public entertainment fun parks they will be widely used.

The standards apply to UK and across Europe. Beyond Europe they are listed online in Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan, Russia, China, the USA and Canada indicating strong interest already.

