

Soft Play Europe

Safety and Durability in Playground Equipment Using KYDEX® T Thermoplastic Sheet

The Company

Soft Play, LLC, is a global company and a leader in the design and manufacture of soft contained playground equipment, with more than 15,000 installations worldwide. The company makes everything from small standard play sets to large, custom themed play systems, as well as free-standing play products and parts, for indoor and outdoor use. Since its inception in 1984, Soft Play has pioneered the concept of soft playground equipment and continues to be an innovator in creating new design, components, and materials to make its play systems more open, visible, fun, and accessible.



Perforated KYDEX® T is used to make partitions in tower structures.

Soft Play Europe S.A. (www.softplayeurope.com), based in Alleur, Belgium, was established in 1991 and is active in more than 30 countries across the continent. As part of the Soft Play world created for the joy and safety of children, Soft Play Europe is committed to providing best-in-class product — offering innovative play environments while maintaining the highest standards of safety and quality.

The Challenge

With its focus on quality in design, construction, and play value, Soft Play Europe always makes sure that it meets or exceeds guidelines under ASTM International, IPEMA, IAAPA, and other safety requirements, as well as its own stringent standards and testing procedures.

When the company was selected by a global food service retailer to create outdoor playground equipment for multiple locations, Soft Play Europe sought to adopt a new material that would meet strict European fire codes. Additionally, the company wanted a material that would substitute for rope to define areas and provide greater safety while still allowing for high visibility — so parents can easily keep on eye on their children while they are playing.



Soft Play Europe began with Vink Group (www.vink.com), the leading European supplier of semi-finished plastics, and its product and market development manager, Luc Tobback, to come up with a solution.

KYDEX, LLC

ISO 9001 and 14001 Certified

Customer Service

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Continued on back

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The Solution

Initially, Soft Play design engineers experimented with using clear plastic materials, for maximum visibility for the foodservice retailer's playground equipment. However, the design team found in testing that such plastics were prone to cracks and breakage.

After consulting with Soft Play's engineering professionals, Tobback recommended KYDEX, LLC and its highly durable, fire-resistant KYDEX® T thermoplastic sheet for the playground equipment application. "I knew that KYDEX® T sheet would not only meet or exceed the strict regulatory and safety requirements but also provide Soft Play with a lot of creative freedom in designing and engineering the end product," according to Tobback.

Manufactured in KYDEX's ISO 9001:2000 and ISO 14001 certified facilities, KYDEX® T sheet is a highly durable thermoplastic alloy available in specialized grades to meet specific fire rating and chemical resistance requirements for a wide range of demanding applications. A number of its characteristics were critical factors in the selection of KYDEX® T for Soft Play:

- KYDEX® T sheet is a cost-effective substitute for other fire rated sheets, meeting regulatory requirements for heat/fire resistance and satisfying worldwide product compliance requirements including UL 94 V-0, 5V and FAR 25.853a, BS 476, DIN 5510-2, DIN 4102-B1 and French Epiradateur Test, M1 and M2.
- In the manufacturing phase, KYDEX® T sheet can be extruded through a variety of methods and thicknesses to meet specific product needs. It has excellent formability and fabrication quality, making it easy to work with and providing good definition, tight tolerance, and easy trimming. This gives Soft Play the freedom to utilize components in a wide range of shapes and sizes.
- Unlike other plastic materials, KYDEX® T sheet is not notch sensitive, so it can be cut, cold punched, and shaped to allow visibility into the play system without splintering and breaking. It can also be formed in a single, seamless piece, to eliminate snagging on corners and seams.
- In terms of durability, KYDEX® T sheet provides significantly higher impact strength, rigidity, and extensibility than competitive products. This enables the surface to withstand the test of time and use — so the end product can provide years of fun and safety.
- Unique in the industry, KYDEX® sheet products are available in a wide selection of colours, textures, and patterns. This enables Soft Play to create customized playground equipment that matches the foodservice retailer's corporate colours and design vision.
- With short lead times and the ability for KYDEX to do small manufacturing runs economically, KYDEX® T sheet can be produced as needed, giving Soft Play both cost-effectiveness and the ability to order product as required, for projects of virtually any size and scope.
- Like all KYDEX® sheet products, KYDEX® T offers chemical resistance and ease of cleaning, for added durability — and, it is produced in keeping with KYDEX's commitment to and regard for safety, health, and environmental protection.



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Continued on next page

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The Results

KYDEX® T thermoplastic sheet is the “secret ingredient” that has helped Soft Play Europe in its position as the best-in-class provider of innovative, safe, and fun playground equipment. Using KYDEX® T sheet, Soft Play Europe has been able to develop a unique product to satisfy the demands of a major customer that has a growing global presence.

Moving forward, Soft Play, Vink Group and KYDEX are sure to work together again — offering other end customers the advantages of excellent technical and sales support, quick response, and highly durable, safe, custom product.

For more information about KYDEX® T thermoplastic sheet or this application developed for soft playground equipment manufacturing, please contact

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