

Bouncy castles

Government statistics indicate that every year there are approximately 10,000 accidents resulting in injuries to children arising from the use of inflatable bouncy castles within the UK. Of these, some 4,000 were caused by bouncy castles being used at home and 6,000 at locations away from the home.



Many of the injuries were serious, including broken bones and severe lacerations. The scale of the problem has not gone unnoticed by Hospital Casualty Departments and guidelines have been issued by various manufacturers associations in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive.

Most of the injuries are caused by children bouncing off the inflatable on to the ground, being hit by other children or just falling awkwardly. Many of these accidents could be avoided by effective adult supervision.

These notes are intended to give some guidance to those proposing to hire inflatable bouncy castles as part of a fundraising event, a fête or a private function, such as a birthday party.

The equipment should be hired from reputable hire companies, and wherever possible, set up, operated and supervised by the hire company's own staff. This is particularly important if substantial numbers of children are likely to be present.

Before hiring

Before hiring a bouncy castle, ensure that the hire company:

- fully complies with the safe use and operation of play inflatables, including bouncy castles guidance issued by the PIPA Inflatable Play Inspector Scheme. This guidance can be downloaded from www.pipa.org.uk
- employees are suitably experienced and well trained adult personnel, where the company is responsible for setting up, operation and supervision of the bouncy castle
- provides evidence of a current public liability insurance policy with a limit of indemnity of at least £5 million. This insurance is to cover the liability of the hire company. It is unlikely to extend to cover the hirer of the equipment.

Self operation

If you are to operate the bouncy castle, in addition to items 1 and 3, ensure that you are provided with written instructions about the safe setting up, operation and supervision of the equipment, and that the name and address of the manufacturer or supplier is clearly marked upon it.

Safety instructions

The safety instructions should include the following points:

- 1 Children should not be allowed to use the bouncy castle if there is a high wind or in wet weather (inflatables can flip over, and slippery surfaces may cause injury)
- 2 The castle must be adequately secured to the ground
- 3 Soft matting covering hard surfaces must be placed adjacent to the front or open sides
- 4 There should be responsible adult supervision, paying close attention to the children at play at all times during its use
- 5 The number of children using the bouncy castle must be limited to the number recommended in the hire company's safety instructions. There must be no overcrowding
- 6 A rota system for different age or size groups should be operated, together with the observance of an age limit of users. (It is suggested that children over ten years of age should not use the equipment)
- 7 All children must be made to remove footwear, hard or sharp objects such as jewellery, buckles, pens and other similar pocket contents. Eating while bouncing or performing acrobatics must not be allowed



Responsible adult supervision ensures children have fun in a safe environment.

