

Bouncy castles



The appeal of any fete, fair or other event can be boosted by hiring inflatable play equipment. Such equipment can come in a range of sizes and shapes for use by adults, children or both. It can include bouncy castles, slides, bungee runs and other styles.

However, their quality, construction and maintenance can be variable, raising possible safety concerns. Also, ensuring they are used properly is an important consideration, as accidents resulting in broken limbs, neck and back injuries or worse are not unheard of. On occasion, the entire inflatable has been known to blow away with people inside it.

Legal requirements

If you are an employer hosting an event where you intend to hire inflatable play equipment, you must comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. Other, more specific health and safety regulations may also be relevant depending upon the nature of the event you intend to hold.

Generally, you will need to ensure that the event is properly managed so that people remain safe. You may need to:

- complete risk assessments to identify the precautions you need to take
- implement those precautions, providing information and training for any employees and volunteers on what they need to do
- document your arrangements and responsibilities for hosting events, perhaps as part of your health and safety policy
- keep records of what you have done.

Even if you are not an employer, you may still have to comply with certain aspects of the Act or with other related law. For example, if you control non-domestic premises. Here, you may need to make sure that premises and any equipment (including any inflatable play equipment) are safe. Beyond this, you also need to meet your common-law duty of care, ensuring that any event does not cause injury to another because you have acted negligently.

Making a start

When hiring/using inflatable play equipment:

- Hire the equipment from a reputable company, with adequate Public Liability insurance (at least £2M).
- Where possible arrange for the company to set up the equipment for you. If not you will have to do this yourself, following carefully the instructions given in the operating manual.
- Have the company operate the equipment for you. Otherwise, make sure you are given comprehensive instructions on how to use the equipment properly (including any checks that need to be made) and follow these.
- Check that the inflatable has written documentation from a competent inspection body to show it complies with the current British Standard (BS EN 14960).
- Make sure that the inflatable has been tested by a competent person (usually those registered with PIPA (PIPA Inflatable Play Inspection) or ADiPS (Amusement Devices Inspection Procedures Scheme)). If it has, it will have either a numbered PIPA tag or an ADiPS declaration of compliance (DoC). You can check that safety tests have been carried out and what to do if the equipment has no tag or DoC on the relevant PIPA/ADiPS websites - www.pipa.org.uk/ or www.adips.co.uk/.
- If you are setting up the equipment, pay particular attention to the requirements for siting and anchorage. The operating manual will detail what is required including the number of anchor points necessary (at least 6); the type and use of ground stakes; any ballast weighting and guy ropes necessary etc. If the inflatable is being used indoors, refer to the operating manual for details on how to secure the device.
- No inflatable should be used in winds above 24 mph (38 kmph - Force 5 on the Beaufort Scale). Some inflatables may have a lower maximum wind speed for safe operation. When using the inflatable outside, you must use an anemometer to regularly check the wind speed. If you don't have one, then the inflatable should not be used.
- Check that all other associated equipment is safe, including any blower provided.
- Complete any pre-use checks necessary including any signs of over-tension or sagging; the anchor points are in place; the connection tube and blower are firmly attached to each other; impact-absorbing mats are in position; there are no holes or rips in the fabric or seams etc.
- When inflated, make sure that its use is always supervised by an adequate number of competent attendants, following any operating instructions that have been provided.
- During operation, make sure that the inflatable is regularly checked and that arrangements are in place to rectify any defect found, or to ensure its safety until this can be done.

Operating instructions should be supplied with the equipment highlighting the need to:

- Restrict the number of users on the inflatable at the same time, to the limit in the manual or on the unit label.
- Keep within the user height limit given in the manual or on the unit label, making sure bigger users are separated from smaller ones.
- Ensure users can get on and off safely and that there is safety matting at the entrance in case of falls or ejections. These mats should be no more than 50mm in depth.
- Prohibit users from wearing shoes, take off their glasses, if they can, and empty their pockets of all sharp or dangerous items.
- Prohibit users from eating or drinking whilst on the equipment. Anyone who is intoxicated should not be allowed on to the equipment either.
- Supervise use so that things don't get too rough and users refrain from climbing or hanging onto the walls and attempting somersaults.
- Regularly check anchor points are still secure.
- Use an anemometer to measure wind conditions at regular intervals.
- Deflate the inflatable safely if the weather becomes unsuitable.



Want to know more?

Other useful health and safety information is available on our [website](#).

More detailed guidance on using inflatable play equipment is available from the Health and Safety Executive at www.hse.gov.uk and from RoSPA at: www.rospa.com/.

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided by the Enforcing Agency for your region. This will be freely available on their website.

Need to contact us?

For further advice Ecclesiastical customers can call our risk advice line on **0345 600 7531** (Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, excluding bank holidays) or email us at risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

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