



# Inflatable Play Equipment Guidelines

While inflatable play equipment such as bounce houses, slides and pools can provide children with hours of fun physical activity, this equipment also can lead to injuries and lawsuits. These guidelines share ways public entities can limit their exposure when renting inflatable play equipment.

## Reason for Concern

**According to a 2015 report from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), between 2003 and 2013:**

- Emergency departments treated an estimated 113,272 injuries associated with inflatable play structures.
- 66 percent of the estimated injuries were to the legs and arms.
- The CPSC received reports of 12 deaths related to inflatable amusements.
- More than 90 percent of the estimated injuries were linked to moon bounces, also known as bounce houses.

## Controls to Consider

### **Risk Transfer: Inflatable play structure rental agreement guidelines**

#### **1. Have legal counsel review rental contracts.**

- Do not sign a contract that indemnifies the vendor for claims arising from the vendor's own negligence.
- Be named as an additional insured on the rental company's insurance policy.

#### **2. Obtain a certificate of insurance.**

- Ensure the rental company's policy includes:
  - A minimum of \$1 million in single-limit commercial liability coverage.
  - Products and completed operations language.
  - Medical expense coverage.
- Retain a copy of the current policy for your records.

#### **3. Prior to the event, obtain parental permission slips for all minors using the equipment.**

##### **Permission slips must:**

- Be signed by a parent or legal guardian.
- Include a description of the event.
- Include the type of equipment being rented and acknowledge the risk of injury.

## **Setup**

#### **1. Have the vendor assist in determining the best setup location.**

- Never set up over pavement, hard-packed ground, or near fences, trees, power lines or buildings.
- Use the recommended fall zone of at least 6 feet around the equipment.
- Use impact-absorbing mats to cover hard surfaces by the open side(s) of the equipment to protect in case of falls while entering or exiting the equipment.



**2. Anchor the unit according to manufacturer's specifications.**

- Sandbags and/or stakes may be specified.
- Err on the side of caution when securing the structure.
- Monitor the structure and anchors during use, as they tend to loosen.

**3. Confirm the unit was cleaned and sanitized prior to delivery.**

- Inspect for any dirt, blood stains or signs of other bodily fluids.
- Reject rental of any unit not cleaned and sanitized.
- Be prepared to clean any bodily fluids if needed.

**4. Conduct a preoperation inspection to locate any rips or tears and to check for proper inflation.**

**5. Ensure blower is:**

- Plugged into a functional ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlet.
- Located away from other devices that have fumes, such as generators, engines or fuel sources.

**6. Secure and cover all electrical cords to prevent tripping.**

**Operation**

**1. The rental company should provide an operator when possible.**

- Monitor the equipment at all times. Shut down the structure if the monitor must step away.
- The operator must be trained to set up and operate the unit.

**2. Capacity**

- All structures have a participant capacity that must be followed at all times. The capacity is determined by the number of participating children in different age ranges. Recommended age groups:
  - Ages 6–7
  - Ages 8–12
  - Ages 13–16
  - Ages 16 and older
- Avoid mixing age groups as older children may bounce more aggressively than younger children.
- No children under age 6



### 3. Rules

- Rules must be posted outside the equipment entrance. A sandwich-board-type sign is one option.
- The operator should brief users and parents or guardians on rules prior to use.
- Children should be removed if they wrestle, intentionally contact others, kick or roughhouse.
- Participants must not play or climb on outside walls, sides or roof of unit.
- All users must remove shoes, eyeglasses and other sharp objects before entering unit.
- All user must wear socks.
- Have children exit the structure and shut the equipment down in the event of:
  - Over-capacity usage.
  - Roughhousing.
  - Tipping or falling anchors.
  - Weather issues.
  - Failure to maintain full inflation.
  - Insufficient supervision.

### Weather

- Don't use inflatable play structures when wind conditions exceed a light breeze. Observe the unit's wind rating.
- Monitor weather visually and digitally (weather apps), as conditions can change rapidly.
- Make sure a staff member monitors the weather at all times, including wind, rain, thunderstorms and lightning.
- Establish an alert protocol to inform the operator to stop use if weather conditions are unsafe.
- Create a contingency plan for bad weather so that all users can safely move indoors.

### Emergencies

- Alert public safety personnel of the type and location of the event.
- Keep trained EMS personnel on-site in case of emergencies, depending on the number of people attending the event.

### State Regulations

- Follow all local regulations. Many states have their own regulations for inflatable equipment, which specify insurance and permit requirements, equipment inspections, play monitoring, etc. Consult with your legal counsel to ensure all local regulations are followed.

Most injuries associated with inflatable play equipment can be avoided with planning, supervision and common-sense practices.

Questions? Please contact Trident Risk Control at  
<https://www.argolimited.com/trident/risk-control-manager/>.