



PlayAction Guide

Bouncy Castles



There has been much coverage on TV Radio and in Newspapers, about a serious accident which happened on a 'Bouncy Castle' otherwise known as an inflatable.

This information sheet is designed to give guidance to assist people who are thinking of hiring or buying a 'Bouncy Castle' or similar. It is not a full Guidance Notice but is 'common sense advice' to help people prevent some of the easily avoided accidents. The advice is intended for those who are having a Bouncy Castle or similar for private use within the family residence. It is not intended for those who are operating one for commercial or fund raising purposes.

Minor Accidents Will Happen...

The usual practice of inviting children round to a friend's house to play is good neighbourliness and desirable.

Children can be expected to get bumps and scrapes whilst playing and they would be worse off if we tried to prevent every single accident (see link 5).

Sadly, occasional tragic accidents occur while children are playing but also whilst they are taking part in sports such as football, cricket, athletics etc. They are few in number and most could not be reasonably foreseen and avoided.

There are very few cases where people are successfully sued. This is because the claimant has to prove negligence on behalf of the neighbour. It is NOT just because an accident happens, no matter how serious the resultant injury.

Parents are not risk averse and understand that children want exciting and challenging play (see links 2 and 4).

Bouncy Castle Suppliers

If people are considering buying or hiring a Bouncy Castle there are some obvious precautions that they should take before deciding whether or not to purchase or hire a Bouncy Castle from a supplier.

1. Check the advice given by the supplier on how to operate the equipment. It should contain something similar to the list below. If such advice is not provided, be wary.
2. Ask the supplier if records are kept of accidents/incidents and what has been learnt from these. If you hire a Bouncy Castle, you should be asked to report any accidents, even 'silly' ones to them so that they can improve their advice to others. If they say that they never have accidents, be suspicious. Bumps and scrapes and even the occasional broken bone can be expected in any boisterous activity for children.
3. Check if the supplier has their inflatables checked annually by a competent person. They should be able to show evidence of any reports.
4. Abide by the advice given by the supplier.

Types of Inflatable

They come in every shape and style! Often, the bouncy castle is in an animal shape, it may have walls, or as in the pictures in this publication, it's a flatbed.



Safety Guide

1. The bouncy castle should be situated at least 1.8m (2 large adult paces) away from any fences, greenhouses, branches, raised kerbs, etc. which would be dangerous should a child fall onto them.
2. Children should take sharp objects (pens, keys, lollipop sticks) out of their pockets/hands before going onto the Bouncy Castle (they could easily cause puncture injuries).
3. Do not let children of significantly different sizes onto the Bouncy Castle at the same time. The smaller child very often comes off worse if they should bump into each other.
4. Do not let children on who are larger than the height you have been advised that the Bouncy Castle is designed for.
5. Food, drink, chewing gum, bottles, glasses, etc should NOT be taken onto the Bouncy Castle.
6. Adults should be informed that they should not go onto the Bouncy Castle.

7. Supervision at the level advised for the particular Bouncy Castle should be maintained all the time that the Bouncy Castle is accessible. If supervision cannot be maintained then the Bouncy Castle should be deflated and moved away. Supervision means watching constantly and not just being in the area.
8. Children should be informed that they must not push other children off the inflatable. If it is a flatbed, this is especially important so as to avoid broken arms and legs. If the castle is of the walled type, then children should not be allowed to bounce against the walls and crash into one another – this causes collision injuries most commonly to heads, noses etc
9. Stick to the advice given on the maximum number of children permitted onto the Bouncy Castle at any one time and let them on and off in a controlled manner.
10. Footwear should be removed.
11. Spectacles should be removed or if they must necessarily be worn then they should be secured so that they will not fall off.
12. Children should not be allowed to climb onto the outside walls. Somersaults and rough play should also not be allowed. Age separation has been found to be advisable in some situations.

Sources of Information

1. Child Accident Prevention Trust (capt) free sample leaflets on a wide variety of child safety issues
<http://capt.org.uk>
and
2. capt Play Safety Services free leaflet "Urban Myths about children's playgrounds"
<http://capt.org.uk/play/default.htm>
3. RoSPA free Fact sheet on trampolines
http://www.rospa.co.uk/waterandleisuresafety/advice/info/TRAMPSFTY_JAN07.pdf
4. Fair Play for Children - Publication (free) "NOT a risk averse society" explains how much of what is called risk aversion happens and makes recommendations to avoid silly restrictions
<http://fairplayforchildren.org/pdf/1206991484.pdf>
5. Children's Play Information Service (free leaflet approved by Health and Safety Executive) on "Managing Risk in Play provision" - accepts children get usual bumps and bruises when playing
http://ncb.org.uk/Page.asp?originx6812in_1832991054480z44q6370913124
6. Brief information on safe use of inflatables
<http://pipa.org.uk/playSafe.html>