

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Inflatable Amusement Rides

Inflatable amusement rides such as moon bouncers and slides are used at fairs, carnivals and festivals. Religious groups sometimes bring in inflatables as part of other recreational activities. Each year there are injuries associated with these inflatable amusement rides. A Consumer Product Safety Commission study of inflatable amusement injuries indicated the following¹:

- *Average annual estimated number of emergency department treated injuries was 6,552*
- *91% percent of the injuries were associated with “moon bouncers”*
- *61% of the injuries were in the 5 to 14 age group and 85% involved children under the age of 15*
- *29% of the injuries were fractures, most commonly to the limbs*
- *Deaths have occurred and are typically associated with striking the head on a hard surface*

Injuries with inflatable amusement rides may result from improper operation, anchoring and set-up. High wind conditions can cause the equipment to break loose and roll over, or move unexpectedly. Adequate planning for set-up and operation is therefore prudent.

Manufacturer’s Instructions and Consumer Product Safety Commission Guidance

The Consumer Product Safety Commission published a safety bulletin on inflatable rides² that provides guidance on various topics including:

- Minimum number of operators on a large inflatable slides, inflatable bouncers and small slides.
- Maximum recommended weight per passenger.
- Maximum loads for individual rides based on manufacturer’s instructions.
- Emphasis on following the owner/operator’s manual for site layout, inflation procedures, ropes, tethers, tie-downs, anchors, use, temperature range, maximum number of riders, size of riders, electrical codes, daily operation, daily inspection, washing, repair, deflation, drying, storage, and transportation.
- Anchoring rides per manufacturer’s requirements and instructions.
- Restrictions on inflatable ride operation above wind speeds that exceed the manufacturer’s recommendation.
- Manufacturers and operators design and operation includes considerations so that the inflatable ride does not collapse onto the riders if the power to the blower(s) inflating the ride should unexpectedly fail.

Additionally, the CPSC recommends:

- A training program for the renter for the proper operation of the inflatable ride.
- A copy of the operation manual should be provided to the renter for each rental period.
- A release statement signed by the renter documenting that they have received and understand the ride operating procedures.

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Inflatable Ride Liability Considerations

The responsibilities of the religious organization or municipality varies depending on whether the inflatable is

- Owned by the religious organization or municipality
- Rented by the religious organization or municipality or
- Rented or owned by an outside organization, for example, a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) may have a fund-raiser on religious organization grounds and rent an inflatable.

If the inflatable is provided by a contractor who also provides personnel to operate it, it is prudent for the rental contract to include an agreement holding the religious organization or municipality harmless from liability. Additionally a certificate of insurance should be provided from the vendor naming the religious organization or municipality as an additional insured. If a sponsor is involved, they should also be protected by a hold harmless. Similarly, if an inflatable is owned or rented by the sponsoring organization such as a PTA the organization should provide a hold harmless favoring the religious organization or municipality and a certificate of insurance provided from the sponsor. The sponsor should also obtain a hold harmless and certificate of insurance from the rental company.

In the event that the religious organization, municipality, or sponsoring organization is providing personnel to operate an owned or rented inflatable ride the staff should be prepared to operate the equipment including:

- Reviewing relevant maintenance, set-up and operation procedures for the equipment.
- Designating trained personnel who are authorized to supervise and operate the equipment.

References:

1. U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Directorate for Epidemiology, Hazard Analysis Division, estimated Number of Injuries and Reported Deaths Associated with Inflatable Amusements, 2003-2007
2. U.S. Product Safety Commission, Amusement Ride Safety Bulletin, Inflatable Rides, 12/5/2001