Inflatables Guidelines

The minimum documentation/information/training the HSE recommend should be provided by any external parties requesting to utilise our premises would be as follows:-

1. Ensure inflatable complies with the current British Standard (BS EN 14960).

2. The label will tell you when it was made, how many people can use it and what heights they should be.

3. After its first year and annually thereafter, the inflatable must be tested by a competent person to make sure it is still safe for use. A new unit should have an 'initial test' carried out at the point of manufacture to confirm it complies with BS EN 14960. The HSE supports annual examination by Inspectors registered with PIPA or ADIPS. Hirers should ask to see proof of this test.

4. Every inflatable should have at least 6 anchor points, though bigger ones will need more. The operator manual that should be supplied with the inflatable will tell you how many there should be. BS EN 14960 also provides more information regarding the calculations to be used to work out anchor point requirements.

5. All the anchor points must be used, preferably with metal ground stakes at least 380mm length and 16mm diameter with a rounded top. Anchor points on the inflatable should have a welded metal '0' or 'D' ring fitted to the end. If ground stakes cannot be used then a system of ballast using water or sand barrels or tying down to vehicles that will give at least the same level of protection should be used. Each anchor point should have the equivalent of 163kgs to give this. Beware of tripping hazards if you secure in this way.

6. Have a good look at the inflatable when it is blown up and before use. The outer edges of the front step should at least line up with the centre of each of the front uprights. Under no circumstances should the width of the step be less than this. The whole unit should look symmetrical and those bits that should upright, should be upright. If it looks misshapen or deformed there may be internal problems which may make bouncing unpredictable. VISUAL

7. If there is an electrical blower with the inflatable this should be tested like any other portable electrical appliance. The tube that connects the blower to the bag should be at least 1.4m in length.

Making sure that the inflatable is run safely is equally important; the majority of injuries come from misuse. There should be constant supervision when the inflatable is blown up and it is strongly recommended that hirers ask for this to be provided as a condition of hire.

Operating instructions

The manufacturer or supplier must supply operating instructions and these should include at least the following:

1. Restrict the number of users on the inflatable at the same time to the limit in the manual or on the unit label. Don't exceed the user height limit given in the manual or on the unit label and keep bigger users separated from smaller.

2. 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 not be more than 2" in depth.

3. Users should not wear shoes, should take their glasses off if they can and pockets should be emptied of all sharp or dangerous items.

4. Users should not eat or drink whilst playing or bouncing and anyone obviously intoxicated should not be allowed on; they are a danger to themselves as much as to others.

5. Don't let things get too rough and don't let users climb or hang onto the walls. Don't let users try to somersault.

A properly trained supervisor will be aware of all of this and should be able to keep the inflatable running safely and make sure that no one gets hurt.

Further information/documentation that should be requested would be as follows:-

- A Risk Assessment. This will identify all the hazards associated with the construction, the use and the dismantling procedures of this equipment.
- A Method Statement. This will identify the control measures the owner/hirer of the bouncy castle intends to implement to remove or reduce the above hazards to a reasonable level.
- Maintenance/Service documentation of the equipment being supplied.
- Who constructs the equipment (Training records highlighting these persons competence).
- PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) test records for any electrical equipment that requires to be powered by electrical mains power.
- Emergency procedures such as evacuation plans and fire emergency plans.
- Safety procedures to prevent anyone accessing electrical points/petrol equipment.
- Storage of fuel (if appropriate)
- A spill kit should be readily available if storing fuels and a spillage procedure should be provided identifying how they would clean up any fuel spills. (if appropriate)
- Fire fighting equipment should be available along with appropriately trained personnel in its use.