

MARSH RISK CONSULTING

MARSH INSIGHTS: INFLATABLE PLAY STRUCTURES (BOUNCY CASTLES) - ONTARIO

The increasing popularity of inflatable play structures, commonly referred to as “Bouncy Castles,” has also resulted in a corresponding increase in injuries to children ranging from bruises and sprains to broken bones and skull fractures. Most physical injuries can be attributed to incorrect set-up, improper use, or unsupervised play. In some cases, severe illnesses can also be contracted from the play equipment as a result of improper maintenance and sterilization.

Most injuries are caused by children bouncing off or out of the inflatable onto unprotected ground, being struck by other children, or simply falling awkwardly. Many of these accidents could be avoided by effective adult supervision and proper structure set-up.

LEGAL AND INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

- While some exemptions apply to inflatable play structures, operators of “bouncy castles” are required to be licensed by the Technical Standards & Safety Authority (TSSA) to operate an amusement device in Ontario.
- Request that the contractor/vendor operating the play structure have current and valid Commercial General Liability Insurance with a limit of liability of minimum \$2 million. Also, request to be added as an Additional Insured and a Certificate of Insurance be provided evidencing these minimum requirements.

RENTAL COMPANY SELECTION

- Ensure that the rental company is licensed by the TSSA to operate an amusement device in Ontario.
- Request a TSSA Ontario Amusement Device Licence for each inflatable.
- Request that the rental contractor provide information on the cleaning and sanitation procedures of the structure. Improper cleaning manner or frequency could lead to the serious risk of a staph infection.
- Check that the inflatable fabric or material is flame retardant.
- The equipment should be rented from reputable rental companies, set-up, and wherever possible, operated and supervised by the rental company’s own staff.
- If you are to operate the bouncy castle, ensure that you are provided with written instructions about the safe operation and supervision of the equipment, and that the name and address of the manufacturer or supplier is clearly marked upon it.
- Ensure that the unintended deflation of the air-supported structure, due to power failure (either plug-in or gas powered electric generator), will not present a risk of injury to anyone on or inside the device. A procedure/plan should be in place to evacuate the device in the event of unintended deflation.



SITE SELECTION

- Select a site that is on firm level unpaved ground.
- The structure must be situated away from obstacles such as fences or overhead power lines.
- Securely anchor the structure to the ground to prevent displacement by wind or user activity.
- Soft matting must be placed adjacent to the front and any open sides of the bouncy castle, extending a sufficient distance forward to ensure sufficient fall protection.
- Ensure all warning signs are in place and clearly visible.

SET-UP

- All anchorage points should be used, and if situated on hard ground, mooring straps should be affixed to solid points.
- Ensure fuel-fired generators are located away from the air supported enclosure to help prevent a build-up of carbon monoxide inside the enclosure.

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- Ensure that electric blowers meet Canadian Standards Association (CSA) electrical standards. Power cords and plugs should be in good repair and all electrical power supplies should be ground fault protected at the source.
- Ensure that the blower is situated at least one to two metres from the inflatable — serious injuries may occur if a user strikes the blower unit.

SUPERVISION DURING USE

- At least one person must be in constant supervision at all times that the device is in use. An attendant who is collecting money cannot also supervise the activity. Supervisors should be checking that the maximum capacity of the device is not exceeded and that the users of the device meet manufacturer's height/size criteria. Also, ensure operation of the device is terminated if winds exceed the maximum stated by device manufacturer.
- Do not allow overcrowding of the structure. If children are constantly knocking into each other, the attendant may not be following the maximum load recommendations.
- If there are a number of children of different ages/sizes, the attendant should operate a rotation of users (grouped into similar sizes) to avoid larger children crushing smaller ones.
- Children should be instructed to remove sharp articles of clothing like shoes, buckles, and jewellery, and the supervisor should enforce the rule if it is being ignored.
- Horseplay should not be allowed, and children should not climb on the walls of the inflatable. The attendant should be in control of the children at all times.
- Children should not be allowed to use the bouncy castle if there is a high wind or in wet weather (inflatables can flip over and slippery surfaces may cause injury).
- Eating while bouncing or performing acrobatics must not be allowed.
- If there is a roof on the inflatable, identify emergency exits and make children aware of how the roof can be opened to escape in the case of an accidental deflation.

ABOUT MARSH RISK CONSULTING

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON INFLATABLE PLAY STRUCTURES, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR MARSH RISK CONSULTING REPRESENTATIVE:

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