

Playground Safety Institute

Safety for the use and hire of bouncy castles or inflatables

The Following are basic safety guidelines for small bouncy castle or moonwalks (inflatables). These guidelines reduce the risk of serious injury and death and cannot prevent all injuries or death as there may be many other contributing factors.

An amusement ride safety specialist should always be consulted for larger inflatables such as giant slides, water zorb balls, gladiator challenges, inflatable climbing walls, mechanical bull rides etc.

Hiring your bouncy castle or jumping castle

1. Always make sure the bouncy castle you are hiring is compliant with the South African National Standard for safety of inflatables SANS 54860 (SABS). The inflatable hire service provider must provide a certificate of compliance with the SANS 54960 (SABS) for the manufacturer and operation and of the inflatable or bouncy castle.
2. Make sure you receive proper written safety instructions for the setting up and operation of the inflatable or bouncy castle. Larger inflatables will require specialized operators to set up the inflatable and conduct a safety check or inspection. You must be provided with a copy of the safety inspection.
3. Ensure that the bouncy castle blower/fan is certified compliant with the National Electrical Safety Standard. The inflatable hire service provider is required by law to provide this certificate.
4. Make sure the inflatable is issued with safety mats or impact mats which are placed in the front of the inflatable by the apron.
5. Make sure that the bouncy castle or inflatable has been inspected monthly for maintenance. The bouncy castle or inflatable hirer must provide you with proof of documentation indicating the monthly maintenance and safety inspection log sheet.

Setting up your bouncy castle or jumping castle

1. Choose as good site to set up the bouncy castle. Always choose a setting up spot which is flat and clear of any debris such as glass, stones and metal cans etc. If possible sweep the area first.
Placing the inflatable on concrete, paving bricks and black pitch (tar) or any other hard surface is not acceptable.
2. The inflatable must not be set up too close to buildings, fences/electrical fences, trees, plants, swimming pools, fish ponds, motor cars, electrical post and lights and other playground equipment. You need at least about eight (8) to ten (10) meters clearance around all sides of the bouncy castle or inflatable
3. First place the protective ground tarp provided by the inflatable hirer. The tarp must be laid down first to protect the inflatable or bouncy castle. The tarp prevents wear and tear of the jumping castle on rough surfaces.
4. There is a huge risk of electrocution from the electrical blower or fan. Make sure that children don't have access to the air blower or fan which is used to constantly inflate the bouncy castle or inflatable. Electrical wires to these fans or blower must be checked for wear and tear. Any exposed wires can cause electrocution or fire. Do not plug the bouncy castle fan into an electrical socket that is being used by other appliances. The blower or fans get very hot after a few minutes and can burn children. The air intake to the fan or blower can also injure children's fingers when they place their fingers through the protective cover or mesh. (Cont. next page 2)

5. Inflate the bouncy castle or inflatable. Make sure children **do not play** on the bouncy castle or inflatable whilst it is being inflated.
6. The bouncy castle or inflatable must be pegged or staked into the ground using the pegs or stakes the hirer supplied with the inflatable. The loops for the pegs or stakes must all be connected and in working order. Any loops or metal rings missing and no pegs or stakes used can cause the inflatable to become airborne in high winds. Larger inflatables require tethers and guidelines to secure the inflatables to the ground. Larger inflatables need specialized operators.
7. The pegs, tethers or stakes must comply with the SANS 54960 safety standard for inflatables rides and devices. Different size inflatables need different sized pegs and stakes.
8. Check the bouncy castle for any tears on the seams where the stitching of the sections can be visible. Any tears in the stitching can burst and lead to catastrophic sudden deflating of the bouncy castle injuring children.

Rules for bouncy castles or inflatables.

1. Always supervise children playing on inflatables. Prevent rough play, overcrowding and dangerous use of the equipment. Somersaults cause many spinal and other serious injuries. When the bouncy castle is not being used deflate it.
2. Never allow adults or teenagers to jump with children smaller children. Many adults and rough older children have caused severe spinal injury and death when colliding with small children.
3. Never operate the bouncy castle or inflatables in high winds. Deflate the inflatable or bouncy castle until the winds die down.
4. Never operate or allow children to continue to use the bouncy castle or inflatable in bad weather conditions such as rain, lightning, wind and thunder. Deflate the inflatable and head indoors.
5. Keep children away from electrical wires and the blower or fan for inflating the bouncy castle.
6. Don't allow children to eat or drink anything whilst on the inflatable or bouncy castle. There is a huge risk of choking
7. Don't allow children onto the inflatable or bouncy castle with clothing, jewelry, scarfs and neck bags which can cause strangulation
8. Don't allow children with shoes, sandals, high heels etc. onto the inflatable or bouncy castle
9. Don't allow silly string or party string to be sprayed around children and bouncy castles. It can cause serious burns to the eyes and damage to the inflatables.
10. Don't allow more users on the inflatables than what is recommended. Most small inflatables can only accommodate between 4 to 6 children or users at a time.

The Playground Safety Institute can be consulted for large events where inflatables and other amusement rides are operated, especially fund raisers, fun days and special events etc.