Bounce House Safety

Bounce houses are commonly thought of as safe, entertaining party activities for children, when in fact there are several risks involved with using them. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the number of injuries related to bounce houses and inflatable slides increases each year. Nearly 5,000 children were brought to emergency rooms for bounce house injuries in 2004 alone. What follows is a series of best practices that should be considered when using a bounce house.

Purchasing Bounce Houses

- Ensure that the manufacturer of the bounce house has built each unit to satisfy engineering standards and that a professional engineer was involved with its design. Ask the manufacturer or product distributor for documented verification of the engineering profile for the bounce house you plan to rent, before you rent it.

- Obtain written and verbal instructions for operating the bounce house from the manufacturer. Evaluate manufacturers for their commitment to quality, safety and adequate capitalization.

- Ensure that the manufacturer is not underinsured. Request proof of insurance from the manufacturer and verify that they have adequate product liability coverage.

Renting Bounce Houses

- Establish a system which uses appropriate terms and conditions to transfer risk to the rental agency (including naming your organization as an additional insured).

- Ensure that the rental agency’s certificate of insurance lists at least $2.0 million in general liability insurance limits per occurrence. Check with your broker or group insurance program manager, as many general liability insurance policies exclude coverage for bounce houses.

Bounce House Site Safety

- Do not set up bounce houses on uneven surfaces, wet surfaces, or surfaces with debris. Ensure that any object capable of puncturing the bounce house is not located within 20 ft of the bounce house. If necessary, use a protective safety tarp to cover the surface underneath the bounce house.
- Ensure that the bounce house is properly weighted down (e.g. with sandbags) or staked down when it is being used. If the bounce house is taller than 15 ft., tether it to the ceiling or to the walls to prevent tipping.

**Suggested Bounce House Rules**

- Be aware of the occupancy limit for the bounce house (the manufacturer or rental agency should provide this information for you) and limit the number of children allowed in the bounce house accordingly.

- Do not allow rough housing in the bounce house and do not allow any gymnastics such as somersaults, back-flips, etc. Do not allow children to rock the bounce house from side to side, as this may cause tipping and injuries.

- Children must remove any accessories (jewelry, glasses, etc.) and their shoes before they are allowed to enter the bounce house.

- Never leave the bounce house unattended when there are children inside. If you cannot attend the bounce house, ask the bounce house’s manufacturer to supply a staff member to monitor the activity.

- Ensure that the bounce house is fully inflated and that there are no holes or areas of sagging. Ensure that no part of the stitching on the bounce house is undone and that there are no rips or tears. In the event that a bounce house begins unexpectedly deflating during use, immediately remove children one at a time.

- Ensure that children inside the bounce house are similar in height and weight. To avoid tipping, do not allow children in the bounce house whose heights and weights greatly differ.


For more information about on this topic, please contact Alliant Loss Control Services at (949) 260-5042 or via e-mail at losscontrol@alliantinsurance.com.

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