

# Bouncy Castles and Play Inflatables – Safety Advice

Reference material: Health and Safety Executive information pages on May 2025

This Guidance is Provided for BHF Community Fundraising Event Organisers. It references current guidance and advice published by the [Health and Safety Executive](#), the regulatory authority for health and safety legislation in the United Kingdom.

## Introduction

Serious incidents have occurred where inflatables have collapsed or blown away in windy conditions.

Simple precautions can help you avoid serious incidents, whether you supply or buy bouncy castles and inflatables, are hiring one for an event, or operate them.

BHF Fundraising events are covered by the BHF Public Liability Insurance, and this requires all fundraising activities to adhere to relevant legal and activity-specific requirements; health and safety law applies to the hire and use of inflatables associated with BHF fundraising activities.

This Guidance, published by the [Health and Safety Executive](#) outlines the simple precautions that can help you avoid serious accidents, when hiring bouncy castles and inflatables for your event, to ensure they are set up correctly, and used safely

## Bouncy castles safety advice

### Buying or hiring

If you're buying or hiring an inflatable for private or public use, you must make sure it has the following:

- either a numbered \*PIPA tag or an \*ADiPs declaration of compliance (DoC).
- written documentation from a competent inspection body to show it complies with British Standard BS EN 14960
- instructions on how to operate it safely

\*You can check that safety tests have been carried out and to find out what to do if the equipment has no tag on the [PIPA website](#) or no DoC on the [ADiPs website](#).

### Setting up safely

When setting up, carry out the following safety checks in line with the inflatable's operator manual:

- No inflatable should be used in winds above 24 mph (38 kmph), which is Force 5 on the Beaufort Scale (small trees in leaf begin to sway)

- Certain inflatables may have a lower maximum wind speed for operation. Always check the manufacturer's operating manual to confirm the maximum wind speed for the safe operation of the inflatable
- When the inflatable is being operated outside, use an anemometer to measure the wind speed at regular intervals. If one of these is not available, the inflatable should not be operated outside. These measurements should be recorded
- Do not use smartphone weather applications to measure wind speed as they do not take localised wind conditions into account
- No inflatable should be used when internal inflation pressure is below the minimum, or above the maximum specified by the manufacturer, in the operations manual
- Regular measurements of the internal pressure of the inflatable should be taken using a suitable pressure measuring device, such as a manometer. If one of these is not available, the inflatable should not be operated. These measurements should be recorded.
- The blowers should be checked daily to ensure that the fan blades are clear of debris and the non-return flap on the blower outlet is fully functional.
- When using the inflatable outside, all the anchor points must be used, with metal ground stakes at least 380 mm long and 16 mm wide, with a rounded top. They should have a welded metal 'O' or 'D' ring fitted to the end
- All inflatables must have at least 6 anchor points. The operator manual will tell you how many there should be, and you should check to ensure they are all still in place and have not been removed
- The ropes used to secure the inflatable should be in good condition and not stretched, frayed or rotten. Never use improvised tow ropes, e.g. bungee cord
- If ground stakes cannot be used because of the surface (e.g. tarmac) use ballast with anchor points each weighing at least 163 kg and with suitable fixings to attach the guy ropes. The inflatable should be tightly secured to the ground so that the wind cannot get under it and lift it up
- Alternatively, ground anchor bolts with a load rating of 1600N can be used with suitable fixings to attach the guy ropes. The ground anchor bolts must be installed in line with the manufacturer's installation instructions by a competent person and checked at regular intervals
- If an inflatable is being used indoors, refer to the operator's manual which will provide instruction on what anchorage is necessary to maintain the shape of the device and prevent overturn
- Where an inflatable is used on either hard standing or any ground that would cause injury should the user fall from the device, suitable impact attenuating material should be provided, but is not required if the device is securely and permanently covered so as to contain the user.
- All other associated equipment must be safe, including the blower

## **Before anyone uses it**

Have a good look at the inflatable when it is blown up and before use.

You should check:

- the correct blower is being used (the blower specification, including output, will be given in the operating manual)
- there are no obvious signs of over-tension or sagging of the structure. Also check if the anchor points have been pulled out during inflation
- the connection tube and blower are firmly attached to each other
- impact-absorbing mats are in position
- there are no holes or rips in the fabric or seams
- it looks symmetrical – if it looks misshapen or deformed there could be internal problems that make bouncing unpredictable and it should therefore not be used
- to ensure the safety of an inflatable in the event of a sudden loss of power, the deflation rate of the inflatable should be tested before each use by switching the blowers off and observing the inflatable deflate.
- the inflatable should deflate at a rate that allows sufficient time for users to be safely evacuated, whilst retaining its shape and rigidity so that users do not fall from the inflatable.
- if the inflatable deflates at a such a rate, that it becomes misshapen or deformed and prevents either safe escape or cannot prevent users from falling, the inflatable should not be operated.

## **Safe use, supervision and monitoring**

**There should be constant supervision by at least one suitably trained person.**

Operating instructions must be supplied and should include the following:

- Restrict the number of users on the inflatable at the same time to the limit in the operator manual or on the unit label. Don't exceed the user height limit and keep bigger users separated from smaller ones
- Make sure users can get on and off safely, with safety matting at the entrance that is no more than 2 inches deep
- People should not wear shoes or glasses, and should empty their pockets of all sharp or dangerous items
- Anyone obviously intoxicated should not be allowed on
- Don't allow users to climb or hang on the walls
- Regularly check that anchor points are still secure
- When operating the inflatable outside, use an anemometer to measure wind conditions at regular intervals, and visually check for changes in wind direction (such as looking at how the trees are swaying). Make sure you take readings in the direction of the wind.