

# It's All Fun & Games Until Someone Gets Hurt

## Safety Guide for Inflatable Play Structures

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Inflatables come in all shapes and sizes. You might think of moon bounces when you hear inflatables, but there are now inflatable slides, obstacle courses, mazes, bungee runs, and many more. Inflatables may be irresistible to students, but Members should be aware of the considerable risks involved in their use. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, inflatable play structures were involved in an estimated 18,000 emergency room visits in 2018 alone.

### Examples of Losses

A moon bounce incident that occurred in Littleton, CO, made national news in 2014. According to the [Huffington Post](#), a bounce house got picked up by a gust of wind and traveled 200 to 300 feet down a field during a lacrosse game. One child was trapped in the house as it moved and the child sustained minor injuries. Another child fell out of the house as it flew into the air, dropping eight feet to the ground. Officials stated that the slide was blown off its support by powerful gusts of wind. This came only a week after a bounce house in South Glens Falls, NY, flew 20 feet into the air, seriously injuring two boys who were trapped inside.



In May 2019, the state of Washington experienced a similar accident during a student body event at a high school. According to reports, a strong gust of wind rendered a bounce house-like inflatable airborne, catapulted it about 20 feet off the ground, and threw it more than 240 feet, injuring 5 students. Reports state the students may have been tethered to the inflatable and it is unclear if the inflatable was properly secured.

### Insurance Coverage

CSDSIP regards inflatables as a high-risk activity, and strongly discourages their use due to a track record of injuries and even death. The liability borne by the Member is significant. When accidents and injuries occur, treatment costs can far outstretch revenue brought in by the fundraiser.

Under CSDSIP'S School Entity Liability (SEL) coverage form, coverage is provided for the defense and indemnification of the Member for any claims arising out of the Member's negligence. However, any claims for indemnification, reimbursement, and defense of third parties, such as the owners or lessors of amusement rides or devices, are excluded from coverage under our Special Events exclusion, subsection (a). Amusement rides or devices include but is not limited to air inflated rides such as Moonwalks, Air Castles, Bounce Houses, Obstacle Courses, and Bubble Soccer.

Coverage is subject to policy terms, limits, and exclusions. All claims are reviewed on case-by-case basis. As always, feel free to reach out to CSDSIP's Risk Programs Team with specific coverage questions.

### Safety Guidelines

Common incidents associated with inflatables include falls, collisions, and rapid deflation due to blower, seams, or anchoring failure. These and other hazards lead to injuries such as abrasions, bumps, bruises, head/neck/back injuries, sprains, and fractures. While inflatables are high-risk activities, there are safety measures you can take to mitigate some of the risk.

# Safety Guide for Inflatable Play Structures

Currently, Colorado does not regulate the inspection of inflatables. If you choose to have an inflatable structure, we recommend that you use the following guidelines and reference the safety information provided by rental companies and manufacturers. These rules are generally appropriate for use with any type of inflatable entertainment device.

- Review the contract with your legal counsel and contact CSDSIP for an insurance review.
- Ensure that written waivers/parental permission with consent to participate are returned to the school or district prior to participation. It is important for these waivers to be as specific to the activity as possible and give the Member consent to seek necessary medical treatment in the event of illness or injury.
- Acquire a Certificate of Insurance to verify the vendor has General Liability coverage. Members should be added as Additional Insured on the vendor's General Liability Policy.
- Ask the vendor to tell you about their safety inspection process, provide documentation that they perform inspections prior to each rental and that the unit has passed inspection.
- We recommend conducting background checks on anyone working/supervising the event who is not already employed by the Member.
- Select a flat, level location for equipment set-up, away from any fences, branches, etc.
- Inspect the inflatable after the vendor sets it up to be sure it looks sound.
  - Make sure seams are securely stitched closed.
  - Make sure the blower is not in the crowd's path of travel.
  - Make sure the inflatable is properly staked and anchored.
- A ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) should be in line with the blower unit unless the outlet has a GFCI built in.
- The vendor should have two properly trained adults to supervise and attend to the inflatable at all times during use.
- Follow all manufacturer safety rules. Post a sign with safety rules for participants and enforce these safety rules.
- Pay attention to the weather. Most manufacturers recommend prohibiting use when wind speeds reach 20-25 mph or above.
- Do not let children of significantly different sizes onto inflatables at the same time, as it puts smaller kids at risk of injury from colliding with or falling under an older/larger child.
- Participants should do the following for their own personal safety:
  - Remove all loose and dangling jewelry, eyewear and/or clothing.
  - Remove rings, bracelets, watches, and earrings.
  - Remove shoes.
  - Remove sharp objects (keys, pens, etc.) from pockets.
  - Follow the attendant's instructions closely. They are there for your safety!

Many rental companies recommend you should not participate in inflatable activities if you have any of the following conditions:

- Current or previous injury to the head, back or neck
- Any respiratory conditions, including, but not limited to asthma or bronchitis
- Pregnancy
- Chronic knee or other joint conditions
- Any heart or circulatory conditions

We want students and guests to have the most fun possible while helping Members maintain the highest level of safety for participants and operators. Remember, these games do require a certain amount of physical exertion, and everyone must judge for themselves their ability to participate.