

Safe Use of Inflatables – FAQ

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Is it a legal requirement to have all units inspected every year?

Yes, since 2006 when European standard (EN 14960) was introduced it is a legal requirement that all inflatable products must be annually inspected by a competent person. Also required to conform to the Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA) and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER).

Where in the law does it say that inflatables must have regular tests?

- Sections 6.1 and 53.1 of Part 1 of [HASAWA](#)
- [Regulation 5](#) and [Regulation 6](#) of PUWER

Why do we need a scheme?

While inflatable play is normally a very safe and a good way to exercise whilst having fun, poorly designed or badly worn equipment can increase the risk of injury to users.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA), manufacturers, hirers, operators and users have a responsibility to ensure minimum risk. PIPA provides a means for everyone in the supply chain to know that the equipment itself is safe- both on initial use and throughout its life.

What is PIPA?

PIPA is an inspection scheme set up by the inflatable play industry to ensure that inflatable play equipment conforms to recognised standards.

What does PIPA stand for?

PIPA stands for Pertexa Inflatable Play Accreditation. PIPA was established when MUTA was known as Pertexa.

How was PIPA established?

One of the main reasons behind the drive to establish PIPA was the recognition by the inflatable play industry that people's safety and health, not to mention its own reputation, could be put at risk by a small number of rogue companies who were willing to cut corners on safety standards in search of quick profit.

PIPA should eventually eliminate such traders by providing users and authorities with a simple way of identifying the companies who recognise the vital importance of user's safety and place the highest priority on it.

The scheme was set up by all trade organisations involved in the industry, and is administered by MUTA, which represents the technical textiles industry including manufactures of inflatable play equipment.

What is the difference between a RPII and PIPA inspection?

Nothing, they are the same, a PIPA inspection can only be completed by an RPII inspector, the only difference is that PIPA is a database of tested equipment.

What is a competent person in terms of testing equipment?

By definition a competent person is someone who through industry testing and examinations has proven knowledge for testing the type of equipment used. With inflatable play equipment the main inspection body is the RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International Ltd).

Only Inspectors operating under either PIPA or the Amusement Device Inspection Procedures Scheme (ADIPS) are recognised by the HSE. All PIPA Inspectors are registered with the Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII).

There are a number of Inspectors operating nationally who are not registered with either scheme. While they may test inflatables to the recognised standard, BS EN 14906:2013, their credentials are not supported by an independent body. The HSE have indicated that they do not support individual Inspectors.

How can you get inflatable equipment tested under the PIPA scheme?

There are approximately 60 inspection bodies registered with PIPA located around the country. All PIPA- registered Inspection Bodies can be found here: <http://www.pipa.org.uk/browse/find-an-inspector>

What do the two types of TAGs look like?

Following a design revision, there are now two types of tags:



Old (before December 2006).



New (after December 2006).

You can check the validity of any tag by entering the unique number into the form on the PIPA website- www.pipa.org.uk

Upon successful completion of an ADIPS inspection, the inflatable operator is issued with a 'plate' or sticker which will be attached to the device.

Note the Holographic Foil that shows it is a genuine plate.

ADIPS registrations can be checked online at www.adipsonline.co.uk

Do Bungee Runs/Gladiator Duels/Rodeo Bulls etc. require to be tagged?

Not at the moment. PIPA is only concerned with inflatable's whose main purpose is bouncing and sliding, the inflatable on a bungee run or gladiator duel is considered a safety device as the main purpose of the activity is something different. These units still need to be inspected under a standard inspection annually as this will highlight any potential problems you may have. This may change in the future. If the equipment fails an inspection, technically the same as a car MOT, you should remove it from use by the general public either until the problem can be rectified or permanently.

What if the inflatable has no tag?

Under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER), all PIPA inspected equipment will be tagged. If the inflatable has no tag then you should check its inspection status with the supplier.

If the inflatable is tagged and the Events and Resilience Management checked the test record does that mean everything is safe?

No, the PIPA report confirms that the inflatable was compliant (or indeed non-compliant) at the time of test. It should still be checked for damage before each use, and you should be aware that three elements make for a safe inflatable play environment:

- Properly manufactured and maintained equipment
- Correct operation (pressure, siting, anchorage etc.) of the equipment
- Adequate supervision of users

The PIPA scheme is designed to cover only the first of these; the controller and/or operator is responsible for the remainder.

What should the hirer request from the operator?

Prior to use of the equipment, it is recommended that the hirer requests the following documentation from the operator:

- An annual inspection certificate issued by a PIPA or ADIPS registered inspection body.
- A PIPA or ADIPS identification tag
- A risk assessment
- A certificate of public liability insurance to the value of no less than £5 million

Always check the expiry date.

Should a Risk Assessment be obtained?

A risk assessment should be obtained from the operator which identifies the hazards associated with use of the inflatable and outlines control measures to minimise risk of injury.

Common recognised hazards with inflatables include:

- Instability and blowing away in windy conditions;
- Collapse caused by loss of pressure;
- Falls from the structure;
- Tripping (particularly over anchorages);
- Access to dangerous parts of machinery;
- Electrical hazards and Generators;

Note this list is not exhaustive.

What could cause an inflatable to fail?

The most common reasons why an inflatable product can fail the standards are listed below:-

- Damage to anchor points.
- Insufficient numbers of anchor points.
- Holes where stitching has failed.
- Low Air pressure – normally this is caused due to damage.

- Walls are not at 90° to bed – this is a manufacturing defect, most times this will require return to the factory.
- Walls are not sufficiently high for intended users – there is a maximum height of users
- Entrapment – This is basically a hole where a user could get a foot or body entrapped which could lead to injury, these are again normally quite easy to rectify with the addition of cover panels.
- Blower Tubes are too close to inflatable – the cone of the Blower must be at least 1.2m from the castle itself, if this is not the case it is quite an easy fix to extend as required.
- Steps are not large enough – A step should come out 1.5 times the maximum height of the bouncing bed and overlap side posts or walls. Where this is not the case will either be required to complete a risk assessment or the inflatable will need to be returned to the factory for the step to be extended.
- Steel Pegs are tested and will fail if they have sharp edges (burring).

Should safety inspections be carried out prior to use?

Safety inspections should be carried out by the operator before each use.

These should include checking that:

- The site given over for the inflatables is suitable with adequate crowd control measures;
- Anchorages are intact and ropes not worn or chafed;
- There are no holes or rips in fabric or seams;
- There is sufficient blower pressure to give a firm footing;
- There are no exposed electrical components and no signs of wear and tear on plugs, sockets, cables and switches;
- The blower is correctly positioned, adequately protected and not causing a hazard; and
- Sufficient numbers of suitably trained staff are available to supervise people using equipment.

Operators of devices should never:

- Set the device up near overhead powerlines or obstacles with obvious projections;
- Ignore prescribed height restrictions or exceed maximum occupancy guidelines;
- Set up in the event of heavy rain or strong winds speeds including gusts over 24mph. The maximum wind-speed in which inflatables shall be used outdoors is 38 km/h (Force 5 on the Beaufort scale) - refer to ANNEX B BS EN 14960;
- Use the inflatable outdoors without securing it to the ground, preferably with ground stakes where the ground is suitable. Each anchorage point on the inflatable and all of the components of the anchorage and/or ballast system, e.g. ropes, webbing, metal attachments, stakes, weights, shall withstand a force of 1600 N (163 KGS);
- Allow people to play on the equipment unsupervised;
- Allow people to eat, drink or chew gum whilst on the equipment;
- Allow people to play on the step, the front apron or walls; and
- Allow people to play on the equipment whilst it is being inflated, or deflated or maintained.

Under no circumstances must the equipment be used if any defects are found which could possibly lead to danger.

Further Information

Further information visit www.pipa.org.uk or www.adipsonline.co.uk or see:

BS EN 14960:2006. Inflatable play equipment

HSE Books

Fairgrounds and amusement parks: Guidance on safe practice HSG175 1997 ISBN 0 7176 1174 4

BS EN 60204 -1: 1992 Safety of machinery. Electrical equipment of machines. Part 1. Specification for general requirements

BS EN 60529: 1992 Specification for degrees of protection provided by enclosures (IP Code)

BS 7671: 1992 Requirements for electrical installation. IEE Wiring Regulations (Sixteenth edition)

Keith Stewart
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