

PIPA INSPECTION LEADS TO HSE PROHIBITION NOTICE ON BOUNCY CASTLE

The Performance Textiles Association, administrator of the PIPA inflatable safety scheme, has welcomed the tightening of procedures against dangerous bouncy castles following the serving of a Prohibition Notice against a Northumberland based company by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

During a routine test by a PIPA registered examiner, a bouncy castle was found to have several serious defects. These included insufficient anchor points, excessive fall-off height, poor stitching and several entrapment points, all of which meant the inflatable fell far short of the requirements of PrEN 14960, the draft Standard for inflatable play equipment used by PIPA Inspectors as a minimum standard for testing inflatables.

The PIPA inspector advised the owner of the company to contact the local Trading Standards officers who subsequently contacted the HSE. Enquiries revealed the castle to be one of a batch of inflatable play items manufactured and imported from China by **Bouncers Outdoor Leisure of Cramlington, Northumberland**. Given that the inflatables had been advertised as suitable for “commercial use”, this fell under the remit of the HSE, who visited the supplier and served a Prohibition Notice preventing him from supplying these castles for commercial use. Local Trading Standards Officers also subsequently visited the supplier and suspended him from selling any of the castles as “toys” in their current condition.

Gerry Muir, HMI Inspector of Health & Safety at HSE, commented – “Section 6 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires anyone importing or supplying any fairground equipment to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that: it is safe when being used for its intended purpose; the equipment has been tested as necessary; to ensure that anyone supplied with it has been provided with adequate information about the use for which it is designed so that it will be safe when used; and to ensure that any buyer is supplied with revised information if it becomes known that anything gives rise to a serious risk to health and safety.

“In this case, these requirements were not being met so we had no hesitation in issuing the Prohibition Notice and then passing on the information to Trading Standards Officers, to ensure the castles could not be sold as toys. ”

During the visit the supplier informed the HSE Inspector that he had sold several hundred of these castles for commercial use. The castles were mostly sold over the internet, and were described as “18ft by 16ft commercial bouncy castles”. These castles, as supplied, are not suitable for third party use, i.e. for hiring to members of the public either for reward or otherwise and anyone doing so may be failing to comply with the duties to ensure the safety of non-employees imposed upon them under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Mr Muir continued – “ HSE would support prohibiting the use of any of these castles where it can be shown that they are unsafe when being used in connection with the entertainment of any member of the public. A PIPA or ADIPS (The Amusement Device Inspection Procedures Scheme) test can be used to determine whether or not an inflatable bouncy castle is safe.”

Clive Moss, Chief Executive Officer of the Performance Textiles Association, said – “This action is a serious warning to those companies who are not taking health and safety seriously that it is time to reconsider. The PIPA scheme was set up expressly to ensure that inflatables meet recognised standards and are therefore

safe to operate. The HSE and Trading Standards have clearly demonstrated their commitment to policing the industry and in the PIPA scheme we have the means through which transgressors can be identified and the appropriate measures taken."

**Further Details: Performance Textiles Association, 42 Heath Street,
Tamworth, Staffs, B79 7JH Tel: 01827 52337 Fax: 01827 310827
www.performancetextiles.org.uk**

**Press Enquiries: Chris Twigger/Josie Diep, Performance Textiles
Association Press Office, c/o Shaw & Underwood PR, Monaco House,
Bristol Street, Birmingham B5 7AW Tel: 0121 622 6861 Fax: 0121 666
6551 e-mail: admin@shawandunderwood.co.uk**