

# Funfairs and Inflatables

## Funfairs and Inflatables

Funfair rides and inflatables are popular and fun attractions commonly found at events which aim to attract family audiences. This type of activity can help retain audiences, improve customer experience at the event and offer additional revenue streams to event organisers by allowing operators access to a captive audience at the event in exchange for a fee. Alternatively, event organisers can pay the equipment operators to attend the event and offer their audience access to the rides free of charge or at a reduced rate.

Although these attractions will benefit the event, the repercussions of one of these structures failing could have devastating effect on the event and its attendees and as a result, event organisers are required to ensure that the equipment being used is fit for purpose and that only competent suppliers are used to provide and install the equipment as per the manufacturer's guidelines.

Organisers must as far as reasonably practicable ensure the overall safety of any attraction on-site so that people setting up, breaking down or using an attraction are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. Event organisers are not expected to be experts in this field and are not required to be in order to put simple and effective measures in place to ensure public safety.

## Contract a Competent Funfair Organiser or Ride Operator

It is common, and normally advised as best practice, for event organisers to contract a competent Funfair Organiser to arrange, coordinate and manage the event's funfair, which will often encompass multiple stalls, rides and operators, but sometimes an event organiser will instead decide to act as the Funfair Organiser themselves and contract each Ride Controller (the person responsible for the equipment be it the owner or hirer) individually.

Whether organisers decide to hire a single bouncy castle for their event or plan to allow a funfair organiser to operate full funfair within their event, it is essential that event organisers satisfy themselves that Funfair Organiser, individual Ride Controllers, operators and attendants engaged to supply, install or manage the equipment are competent and have the required skills, knowledge, training and experience to do so safely.

To assess the competency of the funfair organiser, event organisers are advised to request evidence of their industry experience fulfilling similar roles, their insurance, membership of any industry association or trade body, their operating documentation and references from other events.

To assess the competency of Ride Controllers, event organisers are advised to request copies of their insurance(s), ride specific risk assessments, membership of any industry association or trade body and inspection certification\*. Event Organisers may also request evidence of their industry experience, operator training policies, equipment method statements/manuals and references from other similar events to give themselves additional comfort that the suppliers are competent.

\*Most accidents involving funfair equipment occurs due to poor maintenance and as a result it is a legal requirement for all funfair equipment, including bouncy castles, to be inspected by a competent person regularly.

The Amusement Device Inspection Procedures (ADIPS) & PIPA are the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recognised inspection and certification bodies who represent industry best practice and as a result, and to ensure only safe equipment is used at events in Aberdeen, Aberdeen City Council (in line with industry best practice and national guidance) will only allow funfair rides which have an ADIPS Declaration of Compliance ("DOC", which is like an MOT for a car) and Inflatables which have a PIPA tag which shows that the equipment has been inspected annually and deemed fit for use.

## Coordinating Works and Designing a Suitable Funfair Site

The person undertaking the duties of the Funfair Organiser must be capable of planning, monitoring, coordinating and managing the fairground activities and individual operators to reduce risk to those at the event. The Funfair Organiser will be required to ensure that pre-event Information is provided to all ride operators in order to ensure that key information, such as site rules, H&S arrangements, reporting procedures and work schedules are communicated effectively. See [Coordinating Site Works](#) for further information and advice on coordinating work activities and the role that communication plays in developing safe working environments at outdoor events.

The Funfair Organiser should work with Ride Controllers to understand their requirements, such as; the amount of time required to set up, what space is required for the equipment, their access requirements, staffing arrangements and need to carry out any high-risk works (including the need for working at height, utilise lifting equipment or other plant vehicles) to allow them plan and coordinate the works in order to reduce risk.

This information will also allow the Funfair Organiser to plan the funfair, schedule the work activity, carry out a risk assessment for the works and design the funfair layout.

When designing the funfair layout, Funfair Organisers are advised to ensure that: -

- That the layout allows free unobstructed movement around the site for the numbers anticipated allowing space for queues to develop without blocking the corridors
- Enough emergency exits are available and clearly sign posted (if a standalone enclosed site)
- Emergency responder access is available
- That rides are fenced to prevent injury from fast moving parts

## Assess the Operational Interdependencies and Agree the Roles and Responsibilities

The roles, responsibilities and hierarchies can be conflicting and become confusing when a Funfair Organiser operates a funfair within the footprint of a larger event, so it is essential that operational arrangements are agreed in advance to prevent additional risks being created due to poor communication and coordination of the event and funfair activities.

Event Organisers will be required to communicate and collaborate with their contracted / allocated Funfair Organiser to agree operational procedures, site layouts and ensure that where interdependencies within operation plans exist, that they are consistent and clear.

It may be suitable for the Funfair Organiser to operate their own policies and procedures for their funfair whilst the event operates independently, or it may make operational sense and reduce risk for the two elements to share resources and operate under the one plan.

The arrangements which will be required to be assessed and agreed will differ depending on the specific arrangements for each event, but some common considerations which Aberdeen City Council advise are discussed are:

- Pre-event communication arrangements, briefings and access arrangements
- First aid arrangements
- Stewarding and security of the area

- Firefighting equipment and response procedures
- Emergency procedures
- Wind monitoring and management responsibilities
- Staffing cover
- Lost children/person provision and arrangements
- Risk assessment, site inspection and operational control of the funfair area
- Responsibility for managing and monitoring the area and the working practises of operators to ensure that they comply with their duties and all site rules
- Operational communication arrangements and protocol
- Encouraging communication and cooperation between ride operators
- Contingency planning

## Safe Use of Inflatables in High Winds

Serious incidents have occurred at public events in recent year's due to inflatable equipment collapsing or blowing away in high winds and as a result, Aberdeen City Council have made it a condition (in line with industry best practice and national guidance) that all inflatable equipment must be operated by a competent person and that a wind management plan must be submitted for review in advance of the event to reduce these risks.

In order to be effective, Aberdeen City Council advise that wind management plans:

- Detail a forecast monitoring regime on the lead up to the event
- List the max wind loadings of all equipment, temporary structures, inflatable equipment and other items vulnerable in high winds
- Detail the person / contractor responsible for each item
- Evidence the on-site wind monitoring regime, which should include the use of anemometers by each person responsible for each item
- Provide an action plan for each item, detailing the actions and measures in place for when the equipment faces winds reaching varying speeds (e.g. 75%, 85% and 95% of the equipment's max wind speed)

The maximum wind load is determined by the equipment's manufacturer, who will stipulate the maximum wind speed in which the equipment can be used before it will be compromised and put those at the event at risk. It is unusual for inflatables to have a max wind loading greater than 24mph.

For an up to date weather forecast organisers can check on-line or can call the MET Office directly, who provide both a free service and a paid for service which provides specific and detailed forecast information at the precise event location.

In order for the wind management plan to be accurate, it is important that the equipment is installed in line with the manufacturers operating manual. These guidelines will detail how the equipment should be installed, maintained and used and will include information on how the equipment should be anchored to the ground. When bouncy castles are used on grassland, they should be anchored using metal ground stakes or if used on hardstanding will require to be secured using ballast weighing at least 163kg per anchor point. The exact requirements of each item will be detailed within the manufacturers operating manual.

Again, event organisers are not required to be experts but should employ competent contractors who are able to demonstrate safe working practises in line with information from their equipment's manufacture manual.

Event organisers are advised to read the HSE guidance on inflatables, which is provided here.

## Licensing Inflatables and Funfairs

The use of inflatable equipment on public land, requires a Public Entertainment Licence; information in licensing requirements for events can be found [here](#).

### Mandatory Conditions:

- Funfair equipment must have an ADIPS Declaration of Compliance and evidence of annual inspection
- Inflatables must have a PIPA tag and evidence of annual inspection
- Wind management plans, detailing use of anemometer on-site, will be required to be in place and submitted in advance to Aberdeen City Council
- Equipment operators must be deemed competent

Operators must have appropriate insurance, training and risk assessments in place

## Further Reading

[Health and Safety Guidance for Fairgrounds](#)

[Fairgrounds and amusement parks: Guidance on safe practice](#)

[Purple Guide \(Amusements\)](#)

[PiPA](#)

[PiPA Play Safe](#)

[ADIPS](#)

[ROSPA Bouncy Castles](#)