

## Bounce Houses - What are the dangers?

Do you remember what fun it was jumping on your parents' bed? Nothing excites a child like jumping up and down. Then, along came the invention of the bounce or moon house.

Parents and event organizers are often unaware of the dangers associated with these devices and only look at the fun the kids are having.



Lets take a look at the concept of the bounce house for a second. Inflate a thick piece of rubber the size of a room, put a group of children in it and let the jumping begin! Sounds like fun until the fun ends with tears or worse. Problems arise due to various hazards, which include the lack of supervision; not adhering to guidelines or manufacturer recommendations; untrained or inexperienced operators; and lack of first aid training.

Various information is available on the internet regarding injuries involving inflatable amusement devices. The following headlines can be found at [www.rideaccidents.com](http://www.rideaccidents.com):

- ◆ Inflatable rides go flying - 12 children injured 6/4/05
- ◆ Woman, 24, dead after fall from inflatable climbing wall 5/25/05
- ◆ Inflatable ride blown away with children inside 4/19/05
- ◆ Another inflatable ride collapses; 8 children injured 6/27/04
- ◆ Turbo Rocket inflatable collapses; nine hospitalized 5/7/04

According to statistical data obtained through the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, non-occupational injury estimates for inflatable rides for the years 1997-2002 have increased from an estimate of 1300 injuries in

1997 to an estimated 2,500 injuries in 2002. It is estimated that approximately 62.1% of the injuries involve children under the age of 10 and the most common injury occurs to the neck area followed by the head and the elbow.

The injuries from a bounce house can range from a bloody nose to death. How does this happen, you ask? Actually, quite easily. For instance when a bounce

house deflates, it can drop heavy plastic or netting on top of people, who may become trapped inside the device. Small children especially may not be able to escape and could suffocate. The following is a list of recommendations that are made to help promote the safety of the participants:

- 1) Don't allow small children and larger, older children inside the device at the same time.
- 2) Supervision is critical to ensuring the safety of children.
- 3) Follow the owner/operator manual, which will provide guidance on maximum loads, anchor requirements, and the maximum number of participants recommended at one time.
- 4) Make sure you have adequate clearance around and above the inflatable.
- 5) Do not operate an inflatable in windy conditions.
- 6) If you own or rent an inflatable device, be sure to inspect the piece of equipment regularly and prior to each usage for structural integrity, good condition of all material, and complete, intact, and properly operating hardware.

The safety issues related to inflatable amusement devices will be considered when MMA's Pool or a commercial insurance carrier decides whether or not to offer coverage for ownership or use of the device. Prior to purchasing or renting a bounce house for a community event, be sure to contact MMA's Pool or your commercial insurance carrier to discuss the liability exposure.

## Safety Shorts - Added to the WEB

The RMS Department is pleased to announce the addition of Safety Shorts to the Loss Control section of the MMA website.

Safety Shorts focus on employee safety hazards, property losses, and liability exposures and their appropriate controls. The Safety Shorts can be used by supervisors to review a safety subject with employees during meetings, at the beginning of a workday, or after an accident or "near miss." They may also be used as handouts or printed for posting.

The following topics are available under the safety shorts:

- ◆ Back Injury Prevention
- ◆ Electrical - Safe Use of Extension Cords
- ◆ Electrical - Use of Multiple Outlet Devices
- ◆ Fire Safety - Portable Heater Hazards
- ◆ PPE - Eye Protection
- ◆ PPE - Head Protection (Hard Hats)
- ◆ Power Lawn Mower Safety
- ◆ Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls
- ◆ Working Safely in Hot Conditions

*Additional Topics are being developed.*

The Safety Short titled Working Safely in Hot Conditions appears in another section of this Risk Manager.

In addition to the Safety Shorts, On-line Safety training, Safety Enhancement Grant and Scholarship information and Best Practices are offered on MMA's web site at:  
<http://www.memun.org/RMS/LC/default.htm>.

### ***The Municipal Risk Manager***

The Municipal Risk Manager is published seasonally to inform you of developments in municipal risk management which may be of interest to you in your daily business activities. The information in these articles is general in nature and should not be considered advice for any specific risk management or legal question; you should consult with legal counsel or other qualified professional of your own choice.

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## On-Line Safety Training Hits a Grand Slam



The MMA On-line Safety Training provided since October 2004 on Maine Municipal Association's website has been enthusiastically embraced by our members. Through May of this year, 1,050 registered users representing 208 members have taken 3,093 courses. Bloodborne Pathogens has been the most popular course (55%), followed by Ergonomic (37%), and back injury prevention (30%).

The on-line training is offered to members of the Property and Casualty Pool and the Workers Compensation Fund at no cost to members. These classes can be taken anywhere that the registered user is able to access the internet such as from the town hall, the fire station, or at home. There are thirteen courses offered ranging in length from 15 minutes to 2 1/2 hours. To start using the on-line training, login to the website at: <http://www.memun.org/RMS/LC/default.htm>, choose the On-line Safety Training link and follow the easy instructions to register and begin taking your classes.

## Safety Grant Update

MMA Risk Management Services Safety Grants were awarded in May. We received 127 grant requests and approved 111 grants for a total of \$130,230 to be paid over the next year. Some of the successful grants included: confined space safety equipment, ergonomic workstation improvements, desk movers and wheel dollies, anti-fatigue mats, and multi-media training equipment. This program allows members to apply for funds to be used to purchase safety equipment or services to assist in reducing the frequency and severity of workplace injuries. The program will match the member's investment on a 2:1 ratio, i.e. an award of \$2,000 (maximum allowed) means the member expenditure is \$1,000 or more.

Applications for the upcoming October 2005 grant period must be received at MMA by September 30, 2005. The applications and the instructions may be obtained on the MMA website or by contacting Deb Balmer at: 1-800-590-5583 extension 240, or [dbalmer@memun.org](mailto:dbalmer@memun.org), or from your assigned loss control consultant.

Don't forget the Scholarship Grant Program! The Scholarship Grant Program is ongoing throughout the year with no particular deadline to remember. Scholarship applications can be found on-line or by contacting Deb Balmer or your loss control consultant.

## **SAFETY SHORTS**

### **WORKING SAFELY IN HOT CONDITIONS**



Whether you work indoors or out, heat can cause serious health problems. As temperatures increase, your risk of developing heat-related illnesses also increases. Most often, heat-related illnesses are preventable conditions. However, they can have significant consequences, including death, if left untreated.

#### **Major Disorders Related to Heat Stress**

There are five major disorders related to heat stress and it is possible to have more than one at a time.

1. **Heat Cramps** are characterized by spastic contractions of arms, hands, legs, and feet associated with profuse sweating.
2. **Dehydration** occurs when loss of fluids (sweating) exceeds fluid intake and the kidneys produce more urine than usual.
3. **Heat Rash** (also called prickly rash) is characterized by red bumps on the skin when wet clothing disallows evaporation.
4. **Heat Exhaustion** is generally not life threatening but is very serious. Symptoms include: sweating; cold, pale, clammy skin possibly with chills; dizziness; fatigue; nausea and weakness.
5. **Heat Stroke** is a dangerous condition that should be considered a medical emergency. It is characterized by raised body temperature, rapid pulse, dry skin that is hot to touch and unconsciousness. As heat stroke can result in stroke or heart failure, persons who already have heart or circulatory problems are at an even greater risk.

#### **Ways to Prevent Heat Stress Conditions**

- **Replace Fluids** - Water is the best thing to drink. Drink water (cool, not ice cold) at least once an hour during hotter periods.
- **Take Breaks** - Breaks should be taken in a shaded place or indoors. Breaks should be more frequent the hotter it is, and the more vigorous the activity.
- **Dress Properly** - Wear light clothing that allows air movement and evaporation instead of taking off your shirt. Clothing should be loose fitting and light in color to reflect heat. Wear a brimmed hat and use sunscreen.
- **Eat Right** - Avoid big, hot meals.
- **Acclimatize** - Getting used to heat may take four to seven days of gradual increase to heat exposure. When possible, allow workers to get used to heat in small doses.
- **Schedule** - Try to schedule your hot work during the cooler part of the day, when possible. For example, mow open areas in the early morning, saving shaded areas for mid-day.

***Victims of heat stroke need immediate medical attention (call 911).***

***While waiting for help:***

***1) Move the victim to a shaded cool area, if possible.***

***2) Lower the body temperature by applying cool compresses, wet cool cloth, or even using cool water from a hose.***

## IT'S TIME TO ENROLL IN

# ACCIDENT INSURANCE FOR VOLUNTEERS

<b>Coverage term:</b>	July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006
<b>Cost:</b>	\$3.75 per volunteer, per year
<b>Coverage:</b>	Medical and dental reimbursement, death and dismemberment benefits for individuals injured while performing volunteer duties. (Coverage is secondary to the injured party's health insurance, if any).
<b>Requirements:</b>	Enrolling entity must participate in the MMA Workers Compensation Fund or Property and Casualty Pool and must include ALL volunteers.
<b>Special Features:</b>	Blanket coverage allows enrolling entities to cover all volunteers for the coverage year even if the names of all volunteers are not known at the time the enrollment application is submitted.

## A GREAT WAY TO PROTECT AND HONOR YOUR VALUABLE VOLUNTEERS!!!

For more information, contact Pam Corrigan at MMA  
Risk Management Services, 1-800-590-5583, ext 244,  
[pcorrigan@memun.org](mailto:pcorrigan@memun.org).

## On-line Safety Training Qualifies for EMS Continuing Education Credits

In May, the State of Maine Emergency Medical Services, Education and Training approved 8 of the on-line training courses for continuing education credits for license renewals. They are as follows:

<b>Course</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>	<b>Category</b>
Bloodborne Pathogens	1.0	Category #1 - Operations
Confined Space Entry	1.0	Category #6 - Electives
Defensive Driving	2.0	Category #1 - Operations
Electrical Safety	1.0	Category #1 - Operations
Fire Safety	0.5	Category #6 - Electives
Hazards Communication	1.0	Category #1 - Operations
Lockout/Tagout	0.5	Category #6 - Electives
Personal Protective Equipment	1.0	Category #6 - Electives

In order to receive the credits for completing these courses, simply submit a copy of your certificate to Maine EMS when it is time to re-license. If you have any questions, please contact Dwight Corning at MEMS at: 207-626-3860 or [Dwight.W.Corning@maine.gov](mailto:Dwight.W.Corning@maine.gov).