



PIPA Information Sheet

IS09 – New Inflatables Produced From Oxford Cloth or Light PVC and Other Non-Standard Material

Information Sheet:	IS.09
Title:	New inflatables produced from oxford cloth or light PVC and other non-standard materials.
Date:	November 2023



Introduction

The above pictures represent no more than random samples, these inflatables arrive on the UK market in a wide variety of styles and colours, they tend to range in size from a very small domestic/indoor types up to larger, typical hire sizes.

These inflatables are often found with ramps, steps or even ball pits to the front and/or other access points.

These inflatables may appear at first sight to be nearer to the requirements of BS EN 14960-1, some appear to have suitable anchor points and inlet tubes and the manufacturers/importers are quick to claim compliance and even offer certificates claimed to be evidence of this.

Upon investigating several such inflatables, it is clear they fall short of the requirements contained in BS EN 14960-1 in various ways.

Areas of concern regarding compliance:

Anchor points.

This detail is generally being identified by many inspectors who correctly identify there is often little or no more to these anchor points than a small loops of webbing or other fabric.

Some arrive with what appears to be a suitable anchor point, or suitable anchor points are being retro fitted to enable compliance, these then are being load tested by the inspector using their own equipment and judgement and are then deemed to be suitable, thus assuming the responsibility for this element.

Inlet tube.

The inlet tube is often found by inspectors to be of insufficient length to allow a suitable distance to be maintained from the inflatable device, this is sometimes adjusted by inspectors to allow a suitable distance between the blower and the inflatable device to be established.

Steps, ramps, and entry features.

These inflatable devices are found with a wide variety of entry features such as ramps, steps and often ball pits.

These areas are causing many inspectors to become confused as to how to apply the standard, especially if the unit has an adjacent platform height of no more than 630mm unloaded, it has been generally agreed that if a ramp or step is present then it must apply, however this is not a binding requirement and inspector discretion may be applied here.

Trip hazards should be considered, many of these inflatables have short ramps, often incorrectly considered as slides that have low side walls, these slide walls often act as no more than a trip hazard that could cause users exiting the inflatable to fall onto the ground surface around the exterior of the inflatable, for this reason the inflatable should fail both a compliance inspection and a safety-based risk assessment

A ball pit in place of a step is another regular feature found on these types of inflatables, BS EN 14960-1 and both PIPA and RPII training regarding inflatables does not attribute any competence to inspectors to inspect or consider ball pits, either on bouncy castles, inflatables or elsewhere.

Inflatables with these elements and when sited at a point of access/egress or where flow of traffic passes through the ball pit,

ball pits should not be considered for inspection or tagging under the PIPA scheme until suitable guidance is available.

Materials used in construction.

There is much debate surrounding certification provided with and/or for many imported manufactured inflatables for un-worked materials, this report does not aim to provide answers or recommendations for this.

Rather, this report recommends that inspectors should be aware that materials such as oxford cloth, rip stop nylon and other non-PVC options are unlikely to be suitable for PIPA tagging and when PVC appears to be considerably lighter than is expected then it should lead inspectors to enquire more deeply of the importer/manufacturee regarding certification.

Unless an inspector feels that the assurances given by the manufacturer/importer are suitable, they should consider carefully before assessing the inflatable to be suitable when inspecting under the PIPA scheme.

This of course is easier when dealing with a UK based company than one located overseas.

Containment and stability.

The main failing of many such inflatables is containment, due to the use of lighter materials and often smaller air channels such as towers and beams and/or compartments such as beds, platforms and walls the inflatables often offer very poor containment and can be easily pushed over and the walls require little effort to be pushed out or down, thus allowing users, in many cases below the wall heights to exit or fall out of the inflatable.

Where these circumstances occur, the inflatable should not be considered suitable for tagging under the PIPA scheme or indeed assigned any suitability for use as professional equipment.

Investigators recommendations.

1. Add these inflatables to information sheet IS.05, this information sheet gives advice on how to spot such inflatables but allows inspectors to assess and decide.

2. Add these inflatables to information sheet IS.08, scope of the PIPA scheme as not compliant on the grounds of the findings contained within this report.
3. Decide on an approach to be adopted regarding inflatables that have already been tagged and yet should not have been when considering this report.
4. Produce an information sheet or guidance that outlines the findings detailed in this report.
5. Consider providing guidance to enable inspectors to inspect and assess ball pits when found as a component part of an inflatable presented for inspection under the PIPA scheme.
6. This likely to be completed as a part of the “toddlers play area” guidance that is already being considered.