

know risk

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Indoor play centres

Indoor play centres and jungle gyms are a popular attraction of family entertainment centres, recreational facilities, and even cafés. The indoor play centre industry in Australia has grown rapidly over the last 10 years and the demand is ever increasing. In Melbourne alone, there are at least 70 locations throughout the city and surrounding suburbs.

Risks and hazards are common in the operation of indoor play centres. Please consider the following:

Property Risks

- Exposure – facilities are often located in industrial / commercial estates
- Graffiti and vandalism to external walls
- Materials used in the construction of play equipment (large quantities of foam padding pose a fire risk)
- Deep frying in kitchens (and the use of associated equipment such as exhaust filters and flues)
- Lack of fire detection
- Adequacy of fire evacuation plans and testing thereof
- Lack of training in the use of fire fighting equipment (fire extinguishers, blankets, hose reels etc)
- Damage to floor mats, frayed climbing ropes and netting
- Gas bottles and the use of portable heating units, particularly outdoor patio heaters used indoors

Security Risks

- Amounts of cash (float) kept onsite
- Banking procedures
- Use of safe for storing personal items and large amounts of money
- Standard of door locks fitted
- Glass doors and windows (allow for easy access)
- Theft of items from café – drinks, confectionary, toys for sale

- Theft from offices – computers, sound equipment, cash from safe

Liability Risks

- Slips caused by wet surfaces i.e. drinks, cleaning products, body fluids
- Collisions between children
- Application of first aid and maintaining an incident report
- Segregation of younger children (0-3) from older children
- Injuries caused by simultaneous use of play equipment by adults and children
- Cleaning chemicals (and spills onto playing surfaces) causing skin irritation
- Emergency egress
- Contamination – food handling procedures
- Contamination – hygiene in play areas, particularly ball pits
- Contamination – unsanitary toilets, kitchen, café
- Conflict between parents over bullying and rough play by older children
- Conflict caused by racial tension / religious beliefs
- Lack of supervision by parents / centre operators
- Unsafe / damaged equipment
- Entrapment of body parts including fingers being caught in small places such as gate hinges or doors
- Exposed foam padding, if broken up, can be a choking hazard for small children
- Strangulation hazards – caused by necklaces, clothing with strings, not quite large enough holes in nettings / window cut-outs
- Sharp edges and protruding hardware / fasteners
- Higher risk equipment (trampolines, steep slides, jumping castles)
- Breaching the maximum capacity of the number of children on play equipment at one time

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- An absence of formal hire agreements for “whole of facility” hiring
- Private hiring after hours (and the availability / sale / consumption of alcohol)
- Adults parties and functions (40th, 50th, anniversaries etc)
- Casual employees (and working with children checks)
- Trained and competent staff monitoring and supervision
- Disobeying of play centre rules – no climbing on netting, inappropriate/obscene language and behaviour
- Third party vending / arcade games / Skilltester machines
- Burns from food and hot beverages
- Children left alone at the play centre by parents who “go shopping” or to do other activities

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Business Interruption Risks

- No business continuity / disaster recovery plans
- Lack of or inadequate business interruption insurance
- Closure of the premises due to -
 - Fire
 - Contamination
 - Health inspections
 - Prevention of access

Loss prevention

The ‘golden rules’ for the safe operation of any indoor play centre should include the following:

- Display condition of entry rules in a prominent position near the entrance (perhaps provide parents / guardians with a copy of the rules upon entry)
- Ensure staff enforce conditions of entry at all times
- Supervision is the responsibility of the parents / guardians at all times. Centre operators also have a duty of care to supervise activities and behaviour
- No food or drinks are allowed in the play areas
- Socks are required. No shoes are permitted on the play equipment
- No toys or sharp objects permitted on the play equipment
- No climbing or standing on equipment netting
- No chewing gum
- No unruly behaviour, obscene language or bullying permitted
- Loose fitting clothes and items with strings should not be worn as they may get caught on the equipment and cause strangulation
- Jewellery such as necklaces and bracelets should be kept to a minimum.