Overview

Indoor trampoline parks are a relatively new entry into the amusement park industry. By some accounts, they are springing up at a rate of one a week. Kids and families like them because they’re fun. They also offer a good physical workout, and, when used properly, can help develop balance and coordination.

But trampoline parks are accidents waiting to happen. Too many serious accidents have already occurred, resulting in broken limbs, concussions and in at least one case, death from jumping on a trampoline. The International Association of Trampoline Parks hasn’t set safety standards, leaving it up to the individual park owners to establish their own rules and regulations, and enforceability standards. Trampoline parks are not regulated by any state or federal agency. In short, it’s the wild, wild west in the trampoline park-scape.

This white paper will offer proof that a problem exists, outline some of the safety issues, and suggest some solutions. If trampoline park safety isn’t addressed soon, it is reasonable to assume that the number and severity of accidents will increase. No child or adult should have his or her life interrupted by a crippling injury – or worse – because of a trampoline park experience.
The Statistics Tell It All

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, there were 92,159 hospital emergency room-treated visits from trampoline use in 2010 – the most recent year statistics are available. The available figures don’t specify whether the injuries happened in homes or at trampoline parks.

A glance at ambulance responses to trampoline parks is a better way to gauge the problem. Metropolitan Phoenix, for example, has eight trampoline venues, most of which have opened in the past two years. One center has had 31 ambulance responses, another 16, and yet another, newer venue, five.

The Chicago Tribune, in a feature story last year, weighed in on the issue, noting that “most parks don’t have adequate training and supervision”.

Some argue that the injury rate for trampoline park use is lower than many common sports: about 2 per 1,000 trampoline jumpers – although this statistic is based on self-reporting and is likely vastly under-reported. A study in the American Academy of Pediatrics Journal analyzing injuries in organized youth sports showed that football and soccer injuries are higher, with injury rates at 15 per 1,000 players in football and 21 per 1,000 in soccer.

That may be true, but the fact is injuries are occurring, resulting in an explosion of lawsuits against trampoline park owners. In the Seattle area alone, 18 families are suing one specific trampoline park for negligence. In Chicago, our law firm is representing several families in lawsuits against two different trampoline park venues.

In a CNN web-based story on trampoline park safety, Eric Beck, owner of two trampoline centers in suburban Chicago, acknowledges a plethora of lawsuits, saying, “Everyone who owns a trampoline park in the United States will eventually get sued.”

Even though the parks require customers to sign legal documents absolving them from liability, families of injured victims are suing. While it’s too soon to know the outcome of any jury verdicts, some of these cases have settled out of court. The insurance companies would rather settle than risk paying out millions to injured victims in a jury verdict.
Accidents, Injuries and the Aftermath

Read through any number of stories on the Internet about trampoline park accidents, and you’ll find a description of some of these injuries. For example:

• A boy was partially paralyzed when he hit his head and neck on the frame of a trampoline as he was attempting a flip into a foam pit. As a result of the accident, he missed the last two months of school, spent almost three weeks in the hospital, and went through a series of doctor’s appointments and physical therapy sessions for damage to his central nervous system from spinal cord injuries.

• A boy who was jumping on a trampoline with basketball hoops lost a tooth and damaged two others when the hoop’s net wrapped about his teeth. He will need a tooth implant and other work that his dentist estimates may cost more than $50,000 over the boy’s life.

• Yankees baseball player Joba Chamberlain suffered a career-threatening ankle injury while jumping on a trampoline with his five-year-old son at a trampoline park in Tampa.

• A 30-year-old man died from an injury sustained jumping at a Phoenix area trampoline park when he fell and broke his neck.

What is causing all these accidents to occur? There are numerous factors.

The Causes

Most trampoline park injuries occur from jumpers colliding with others, landing improperly, or falling off onto the springs or frames. When children and adults are allowed to jump on the same floor, the chances of a collision and injuries increase. Double jumping, when more than one person uses the trampoline at the same time, also increases the chance of injuries.

Other causes are overcrowding, faulty and/or poorly maintained equipment and the failure of many parks to offer instruction on the proper way to use trampolines, which experts believe could help reduce the number of accidents. Improper supervision and the lack of properly trained personnel are also contributing factors.

Know and Follow Trampoline Park Safety Tips

Millions of children and adults use the trampoline parks without incident. Chances of a fun, accident-free experience and happy memory can increase if you follow these safety tips posted on the facility’s website and at the facility’s location. The “Tips for Family Trips” website offers some suggestions from the personal perspective of a mom.

Visit the park’s website in advance, read their safety information, and fill out the legal waiver. If you’re taking children other than your own,
Be familiar with other child safety tips for parents that can help ensure they have a safe experience at a trampoline park.

**Talk to your children in advance about safety issues.** When you arrive at the park, remind your children about safety by reading with them the safety information posted there.

**Avoid peak hours, especially on weekends, holidays and weeknights.** Uncrowded trampolines are safer.

**Wear comfortable clothing, leave dangly jewelry at home, and store your valuables in the car.**

**Keep kids in their own area.** Littler children often, or should, have their own jumping area. Make sure your children know to follow the directions of employees who are there to enforce the rules.

**Know the signs that your child may have a concussion.**

who are under age 18, be aware that the parents will need to sign a separate waiver.

Trampoline use has its history in serving as training devices for gymnasts and acrobats, and later, by military pilots. Trampolines were never meant for widespread use as recreational devices. But manufacturers figured out how to make inexpensive trampolines for backyard use, and now they have evolved into indoor trampoline facilities.

Given its dismal safety record, should parents and kids take a chance and visit trampoline parks as a recreational outlet? Ultimately, it’s their decision, but perhaps they’ll want to consider this: the American Academy of Pediatrics advises that no children should play on trampolines, and further, that trampolines should only be used for training programs and certain sports, and only under the supervision of a trained adult. The Academy recommends that trampolines “should never be used in the home environment, in routine physical education classes or in outdoor playgrounds.” Their rules don’t explicitly mention trampoline parks, but draw your own conclusions.
The American Association for Orthopedic Surgeons also weighed in on trampoline safety after Yankees player Joba Chamberlain was hurt when jumping on a trampoline at one of the parks. The association advises against more than one person jumping at one time and that trampolines should not be used in home environments or outdoor playgrounds because of the high possibility of injuries.

There is little to no government regulation of the industry, although county officials typically inspect commercial businesses for fire hazards, structural safety and sprinkler systems. Most don’t inspect the trampoline equipment or regulate how they are used.

The International Association of Trampoline Parks bills itself as an organization that “promotes safe operations, facilitates commercial success and stimulates growth of the trampoline park industry.” The ASTM International has established a special task force to establish standards for trampoline court safety. A draft standard has been written and is being reviewed by the committee. An industry standard that all parks adhere to will certainly be a step in the right direction.

Romanucci & Blandin: The Solution

Since we established our law firm nearly 15 years ago, our mission has been to do everything possible to advocate for child safety and defend children’s rights. Since children are the primary users of trampoline parks, we are extremely concerned about the safety risks they pose.

There is no denying that trampolines are fun for kids and adults alike. They can be good exercise and help kids and adults with balance and coordination. But trampolines should never be considered a toy.

Government and industry regulation may help reduce the number and severity of incidents. But until then, injured jumpers have no recourse but to get the best source of medical care for their injuries and file a lawsuit against the trampoline park owners.

Our Advice?

Use trampolines and trampoline parks if you must, but know there are tremendous safety risks that can lead to catastrophic injuries, paralysis and even death.
Romanucci & Blandin, LLC is a top Illinois plaintiff’s personal injury and civil trial practice law firm, representing individuals and their families in catastrophic personal injury matters. We are currently representing families in lawsuits against two different trampoline parks in the Chicago area.

Founded in 1998, Romanucci & Blandin represents plaintiffs in numerous practice areas, including personal injury, wrongful death, workers’ compensation, pharmaceutical mass torts, civil rights, police misconduct, excessive force, aviation, product liability, medical malpractice and premises liability.

Our resources and significant track record of success has allowed us to serve our clients across the country as we have developed a reputation amongst clients and referring attorneys as the one law firm for your injury needs.

For a free consultation about your injury case, call 1-312-458-1000 or email us at info@rblaw.net.