

# Area association risk management

Sport cannot be separated from risk. Its appeal lies in its inherently risky nature — players could be injured, underdogs could triumph and fans could get rowdy.

While sport's characteristic risk is arguably one of the biggest draws for fans, it is definitely one of the biggest drawbacks for stakeholders, who try to confine the risks without simultaneously draining sport of its allure. Stakeholders such as Area Associations that have a regulatory or sanctioning function are constantly trying to manage their ever-present risk in accordance with the law.

As an Area Association, you face the difficult task of managing risk that can never be fully eliminated in a niche industry. Failure to do so could result in criminal or civil liability. Capitalise on risk management strategies that limit your risk.

## Assessing Your Risk

Because you represent an organisation relying on employees or volunteers, you have a legal obligation to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of them and anyone else affected by your Association. For Associations exposed to many risks every day, this can seem impossible. But with thorough risk management, you can clamp down on its risk to protect employees, volunteers, participants, spectators and members of the public.

As an Area Association offering sport-specific guidance in order to comply with relevant health and safety legislation—you must identify risks, provide appropriate guidance and ensure that affiliated clubs, leagues and officials including referees follow every requirement, rule and procedure.

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Make sure your Association develops an administrative structure that is conducive to risk management. This structure should accomplish the following to ensure legal compliance and risk reduction:

- Provide a statement on your health and safety principles.
- Define the organisational structure for managing your sport's activities.
- Establish rules and procedures for controlling the risks associated with your sport.
- Review general rules and procedures and revise them when necessary.

As an Area Association it is understood you might not shoulder sole responsibility for health and safety at all levels of the sport. But a solid managerial framework is essential for pinpointing and minimising risk for associated members which look to you for guidance. You should establish procedures that enable associated clubs and leagues to safely manage their own events.

“The information gleaned from your risk assessments should be shared with all stakeholders to encourage consistent risk management.”

Perform risk assessments according to the five steps listed below to identify your risks and ensure all affiliated clubs, and leagues do the same.

1. Identify the facilities, equipment and activities involved.
2. List the hazards associated with these facilities, equipment and activities.
3. Name the people directly or indirectly affected by these hazards.
4. Estimate the level of risk experienced by the people exposed to these hazards.
5. Recommend measures required to lower the risks to acceptable levels.

The information gleaned from your risk assessments should be shared with all stakeholders to encourage consistent risk management. The same goes for records of ill health and injury associated with your sport's activities. These records can help shed light on whether or not your associations risk management strategies are effective.

### Controlling Your Risk

After assessing your risk, implement control measures, which help limit risk, based on your findings. Control measures fall into three general categories: (1) **physical controls**, which include the maintenance of equipment, general facilities and medical facilities; (2) **management controls**, which include defining and enforcing rules; and (3) **personal controls**, which include the capabilities and responsibilities of stakeholders such as coaches, officials and players.

The control measures you implement will depend on the hazards you face. Use the following list of general hazards and their accompanying control measures as a starting point to identify and manage your own hazards.

- **Activities** – Specify management controls to limit liability for all events associated with the sport, such as competition and training.
- **Facilities** – Identify the range and acceptability of all activities that take place at your facilities. Additionally, institute procedures for inspecting and maintaining all facilities.
- **Equipment** – Assess the suitability of equipment used by participants to ensure it meets manufacturer specifications and complies with the sport's rules and guidelines.
- **Participants** – Communicate to participants the risks they face by engaging in the sport. Consider a consent form for all participants.
- **Officials and instructors** – Establish the level of training required for employees and volunteers that officiate or instruct.
- **Spectators** – Anticipate spectator attendance and implement crowd control strategies such as liaising with the local police.
- **Public** – Examine whether your activities could negatively affect the public. If they could, suggest measures to control those activities.
- **Media** – Determine whether the media will need access to your venue and devise a policy that ensures safe access for all media members.

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