

Safe playing environment

Inspections are a useful method in identifying risks and must become an integral part of the club's philosophy prior to the commencement of play.

A general inspection may identify normal wear, tear and general deterioration of physical assets and features such as the playing surface, equipment, facilities, access to and from the venue, waterways and pathways.

Individual industry checklists have been prepared to assist in identifying sports specific risks detailing:

- metric measurement
- field of play
- pitch
- playing equipment
- participants' equipment
- modified rules for children
- other safety hints.

These checklists have arisen following industry risk assessments which identified:

- inappropriate body size or strength,
- inadequate fitness level,
- lack of adequate warm-up,
- lack of, or defective protective gear,
- poor footwear or sports gear,
- poor playing facilities,
- poor supervision and refereeing, and
- recklessness of the injured party.

“It is important to consider the playing environment and how injuries could occur. Care should be taken to minimise the risk.”



Inspection and tests

Inspections and tests should be carried out by suitably qualified persons on behalf of the venue provider to ensure that the safety standards are maintained.

Annual inspection

A detailed inspection of the playing surface, including all components and installations, should be arranged annually by the Venue Provider/ occupier in order to ensure that load-bearing elements are capable of withstanding the pressures to which they are likely to be subjected and that they are fit for their intended purpose.

Inspection should be carried out by a responsible person. Engineers commissioned to assess structural safety of buildings should have specialisation in structural safety. Inspection and testing of crush barriers, handrails and other protective barriers should be carried out by qualified persons.

Other inspections

Warning, detection, lighting and public address systems, if present, are vulnerable to vandalism, and this should be taken into consideration when installing them. All automatic fire detection and fire warning, emergency lighting and public address systems should be tested 24 hours before each event.

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Turnstiles and metering systems should be tested before each event to ensure they are in proper working order. There should be contingency plans in case any of these systems are not operating properly and cannot be rectified before the event. Such plans should be formulated in consultation with the local authority, police and fire services for the use of acceptable substitute measures or (if necessary) the closure of relevant areas of spectator accommodation until the fault is remedied.

The playing surface should be inspected before, during and after each event to ensure that there is no accumulation of combustible waste and that any hazardous materials (if it is essential that they be stored) are safely stored, well away from public areas.

Deformation/damage

Following each event, a general visual inspection of the playing surface and surrounding areas should be made for signs of damage which might create potential danger.

Particular attention should be paid to the condition of terraces, viewing slopes and stairways. Crush barriers and balustrades should be examined for deformation or any other overt signs of weakness.

Fire precaution measures should also be inspected for damage. Alarms and other electrical installations should be checked to ensure continued compliance with the relevant industry standards. Turnstiles should be checked for damage which might impair efficiency.

Records

Records of all inspections and tests, together with a record of remedial actions taken, should be kept and maintained. The required level of competence of those carrying out the tests should be specified.



Head-room

All parts of the venue used by the general public should have a minimum head-room of not less than 2m. Exit routes should, wherever possible, have a head-room of 2.4m. Precautions should be taken to prevent people from climbing on roofs, pylons, hoardings and other structures. Where possible, such structures should be fitted with unclimbable devices e.g. stout barriers or close-boarded enclosures.

Spikes and barbed wire etc should only be installed above the minimum headroom and preferably at a minimum height of 2.4m from the base. Spikes or other similar devices should not be installed on pitch perimeter fences. Nor should such fences have sections overhanging or returning inwards towards spectators.

Lighting

Where natural lighting in any section of the venue accessible to the public is deficient, adequate artificial lighting should be provided. If the venue is to be used after dark, all parts accessible to the public should have adequate lighting to enable people to see their way into, around and out of the venue. These provisions are particularly important in relation to entry and exit routes and stairways used by the public. Emergency lighting should be provided and conform to the relevant industry standards.

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0047-0918

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