

Sports Grounds Safety Authority Guidance

Frequently Asked Questions

Safety for All at Sports Grounds

Guidance is available from the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) on the responsibilities of sports grounds for ensuring the safety of all people at the ground during an event.

The questions and answers below are intended to help clarify issues that might be raised when considering the guidance.

1. Sports grounds

Q.1. We have arrangements in place to look after our staff safety seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. Aren't these sufficient for an event day?

They probably are but, if you have a safety certificate, during the event period, the Safety at Sports Ground legislation is in force and you should check that your normal arrangements are sufficient for the extra risks identified on an event day. The consideration on which legislation is most suitable will probably only come to the fore if the local authority decides to take some sort of enforcement action.

Q.2. We are a sports ground that does not have a safety certificate. Does this exempt us from this guidance?

No; you still have your responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act, Regulatory Reform Order and, possibly, Licensing Act. In serious cases where admitting spectators might present a serious risk to spectator safety, the local authority could prohibit spectators from entering your ground under s10, Safety at Sports Ground Act.

Q.3. Where we have stewards on the segregation lines at football matches, do we need to risk assess the likelihood of them being injured from assault or missiles?

You will need to ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken and that where a risk is identified any mitigating measures are put in place. This could involve widening the segregation line, providing personal protection equipment, ticketing arrangements or other measures. Whether this action is being taken under health and safety legislation or safety at sports ground legislation is not relevant to the action to be taken to make the stewards safe, just to the enforcement or control measures available to the local authority.

2. Certifying Authorities

Q.4. Is a sports ground's responsibility for safety under the Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975 and Fire Safety and Safety at Sports Act 1987 limited to caring for spectators?

No, all people are entitled to protection from harm and should be covered by the ground's arrangements for an event. It is the view of the SGSA and the HSE that, at a ground where a safety certificate is in place, it would be most appropriate to use the 1975 or 1987 Act predominantly to handle risks to safety which are connected with the use of the ground for the specified activity in the safety certificate.

Q.5. If a situation arises where a local authority is considering enforcement action, under which legislation should they take action?

It would be for the local authority to determine the most appropriate and effective legislation to apply in the circumstances. Securing the safety of all those at the sports ground will require application of the most appropriate and effective legislation to manage the risks presented by the event. This may mean working with colleagues in your local authority to decide the best way forward. Where responsibilities for different legislation is undertaken by different authorities, local protocols on enforcement will need to put in place.

Q.6. Does this new guidance mean that we will have to look at the display screens used in the control room and put a condition into the certificate to cover their use by staff?

Whilst you may wish to look at the use of the control room during the period of a specified activity or event, display screen equipment assessments are adequately covered by the health and safety regime and you do not need to duplicate their work.

Q.7. Can we expect to receive risk assessments from the ground to deal with the risks faced by emergency service staff during an event?

Staff belonging to the emergency services need to be considered to the extent that all people are – for example, they must be protected from structural collapse and must be factored into evacuation or people movement plans. However, emergency services staff are exposed to additional risks while carrying out their unique roles for which they will have implemented their own risk assessments and safe working policies.