

Safety in broadcasting sports events

HSE information sheet

Introduction

This information sheet is one of a series produced by the Joint Advisory Committee for Entertainments (JACE). It gives general guidance for broadcasting activities at sports grounds and is relevant to both television and radio. More specific guidance is available on many of the topics covered (see Further reading).

The advice is principally directed at producers, their employees and freelancers undertaking pitch-side filming, and those using commentary boxes or observation platforms at height within a sports ground.

In this information sheet, 'must' is used only where there is an explicit legal requirement to take a certain action, 'should' is used to indicate what to do to comply with the law – although dutyholders are free to take other action if that would result in compliance.

What the law says

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (the HSW Act) requires employers to take reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health and safety of all employees and anyone else who may be affected by their work. This will include affected freelance staff and members of the public.

Other legislation may apply depending on the details of the work being carried out. For instance, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 build upon the requirements in the HSW Act and require dutyholders to assess and control risks.

Similarly, the Work at Height Regulations 2005 place specific duties upon employers and those in control of any work at height activity to ensure work is planned, supervised and carried out by competent people to make sure it is done safely. This includes using the right type of equipment for working at height.

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Roles and responsibilities

The legal duties for health and safety rest with the employer. This normally means the production company. On a day-to-day basis, the overall responsibility for ensuring that the appropriate standards of health and safety are achieved and maintained throughout the production process normally rests with the producer.

In this information sheet, the term producer is used to represent the person in overall control of the production activity.

The producer is responsible for ensuring appropriate communication, coordination and control of the overall event, taking into account any risk assessments from others including any specialist contractors involved in the production.

Hazards

There are a number of hazards that may be faced by people engaged in the broadcast of sports events. These may include:

- working at height;
- gaining access to outside broadcast (OB) studios/gantries/other camera positions;
- players and officials colliding with people and equipment on the touchline;
- trailing cables causing trip hazards;
- manual handling of heavy/awkward equipment;
- electrically-powered equipment and power sources;
- noise;
- crowd disorder and violence towards staff;
- fire and other emergencies;
- adverse weather.

Risk assessment

The producer in control of broadcasting sports events must ensure risks arising from that work are

controlled. To do this they must think about what things in the workplace might cause harm to people and take such steps as are necessary to eliminate or reduce the risk to acceptable levels. The risk assessment must be reviewed as necessary in light of new information and as the situation changes. This process is sometimes called dynamic risk assessment.

Risk assessment is required by law. If there are fewer than five employees it does not have to be written down.

The producer must liaise with others involved in the event, eg the event organiser and venue management, to make sure that all hazards arising from the event have been identified and that everyone is aware of the risks arising from each other's activities, and of the control measures that are in place.

Risk management

Working at height

Working at height remains one of the biggest causes of work-related fatalities and major injuries.

The following control measures should be followed. In practice, it may be necessary to apply a combination of these measures to adequately control the risk from working at height.

- Avoid work at height where possible, eg use booms and jib arms to get a camera or microphone into position, lower trusses or hoists to the ground to fit and adjust lights.
- Use equipment to prevent falls where work at height cannot be avoided.
- Wherever possible, use an existing place of work that has a guard rail or use mobile elevated work platforms or scaffold towers. These types of collective protection should be chosen over individual protection such as restraint harnesses.
- If the risk of a fall remains, use equipment to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall. Consider the use of collective protection measures – eg safety nets, soft landing systems over individual protection such as fall-arrest equipment.

The equipment provided for use by people working at height must be fit for purpose and safe. It must be constructed and maintained correctly.

When working from temporary structures such as scaffolding, access towers and platforms, check with the venue management that the structure is safe and will be available for use. Very often the producer/broadcaster will be responsible for contracting a competent scaffolding firm and they must ensure that the scaffold is safe, fit for purpose and constructed to the correct specification.

Working platforms should have fully-boarded floors and guard rails. They should also be fitted with nets or toe boards, as appropriate, to prevent items falling from the platform and causing injury to those below. They should be fitted with safe means of access.

Access to upper gantries and broadcast positions

Access routes to gantries and broadcast positions should be:

- of sound construction;
- securely fixed and, where necessary, fitted with handrails;
- free from obstruction and debris;
- adequately lit, even under emergency conditions.

Any safety defects found in these routes should be brought to the attention of the producer/ground management as appropriate and be corrected before they are used.

Suitable access arrangements should be provided for moving equipment into position. Any lifting should be properly planned and carried out safely. To reduce manual handling, locate the OB vehicle/s as close as possible to the studio/gantry positions and use manual handling aids such as trolleys and barrows. For further information, visit HSE's manual handling webpages (see Further reading).

Pitch-side cameras

Take steps to reduce the risks and consequences of collisions occurring between operators/equipment and players/officials. Things to consider include:

- placing fixed camera positions behind spectator barriers or adjacent to permanent fixtures such as dugouts to provide some protection;
- using suitable fixed camera protection (eg buffer bags installed to the height of the top of the mounting);

- measures to make sure that mobile camera work does not encroach onto the field of play and into areas where touch judges/officials are operating – to assist the camera operator/cable minder, another person may need to act a safety lookout.

Slips and trips

Plan cable routes so as not to create trip hazards. Where possible, cables should be flown well above head height, or if at ground or floor level they should be ramped, matted or dug in.

Electrical safety

Broadcasters/producers and others using electrical equipment must do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure that electrical installations and equipment at an event are properly selected, installed and maintained so as not to cause danger.

Metal working platforms on which electrical equipment is being used should be bonded/earthed in accordance with current standards to make sure they cannot 'become live' if a fault develops with the electrical equipment.

For further information, visit HSE's electrical safety webpages (see Further reading).

Noise

Potentially harmful noise may be an issue at some events, eg at football matches or a motor racing circuit. Environmental noise can also mean that talkback on some communications equipment has to be turned up, so that staff can hear instructions clearly.

In this and other circumstances where employees are fortuitously or deliberately subject to high levels of noise the risk of hearing damage must be assessed by employers and measures must be taken to eliminate the risk or reduce exposure to acceptable levels.

If the risk assessment indicates that there is a risk to health for employees exposed to intended or environmental noise, they should be placed under suitable health surveillance.

For further information, visit HSE's noise at work webpages (see Further reading).

Crowd disorder and violence

Experience has shown that camera crews filming on touchlines can be vulnerable to violence from spectators.

The broadcast producer should liaise with the sports ground management/police/stewards during the planning stage and put in place suitable control measures.

Fire and other emergency procedures

The producer should make sure everyone working on the production is fully briefed on the fire and other emergency procedures established by the sports ground management.

In addition, care should be taken in assessing escape routes from broadcast positions, especially where they are at height. Procedures should include the ability to self-rescue using self-lowering equipment (for which training should be provided) and equipment such as ladders that can be quickly deployed from below. Emergency arrangements for broadcasting staff should not compromise arrangements for others at the ground, eg by blocking exits used by spectators.

Suitable arrangements should also be in place during the rig and de-rig phases of a broadcast to ensure staff can escape to places of safety in case of fire or other emergency.

Adverse weather

Make sure that any measures required to keep temporary structures safe during adverse weather are implemented. For example, if the OB studio and gantry are open to the weather, monitor and measure the local conditions. Make sure that staff in those places know in what conditions they should leave their positions.

Further reading

A review of work at height practices by the broadcasting industry in sports stadiums used by the UK Premier and Scottish Premier football leagues: 'Wash Up' report HSE 2009 www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/pdf/broadcasting-washup.pdf

Controlling noise at work: The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005: Guidance on Regulations

L108 (Second edition) HSE 2005 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l108.htm

Electricity at work: Safe working practices HSG85 (Third edition) HSE 2013 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg85.htm

Risk assessment: A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace Leaflet INDG163(rev4) HSE 2014 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.htm

Sound advice: Control of noise at work in music and entertainment HSG260 HSE 2008 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg260.htm

Violence to workers in broadcast and filming Information Sheet ETIS2 HSE 2011 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/etis2.pdf

Electrical safety at events www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/electrical-safety.htm

Event safety: Work at height www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/falls-from-height.htm

Fire safety in the workplace www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities

Manual handling www.hse.gov.uk/msd/faq-manhand.htm

Noise at work www.hse.gov.uk/noise

Safe use of metal working platforms and tower scaffolds www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/scaffold.htm

Work at height www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/index.htm

Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.

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