

Health and Safety obligations when organising an event

Anyone organising an event has a duty and responsibility to protect the health, safety and welfare of anyone involved in any way – that means volunteers, staff, participants, spectators and neighbours.

Comprehensive consideration of every health and safety issue your event will involve is vital to protecting all participants from harm, and your charity from liability.

First aid facilities

The provision of first aid facilities will very much depend on the size of the event, the numbers of people employed, and the nature of activities undertaken. This would generally be supplied by external organisations like the Red Cross or St Johns. Organisers must carry out a risk assessment to consider first aid matters, taking into account spectators, general public safety, volunteers and participants. To be considered a first aider, a person must be over the age of 18 and hold a first aid certificate.

- First aid and medical facilities should be available either at a fixed site or throughout the route, for example at a fun run. For road running and athletic events, refreshment facilities should be clearly marked and available throughout the event and also at the finish line.
- An accident book or equivalent should be used to record all accidents.

Fire safety and evacuation

The organiser needs to consider risk from fire and any subsequent evacuation, even if the event is held outdoors. Temporary structures such as marquee tents still need consideration to ensure the public can escape in the event of a fire occurring. Organisers have a duty to ensure that emergency procedures for evacuation are included in planning processes. Indoor venues should have an evacuation plan as part of their premises' public entertainment licence.

Communications, lighting, heating and electricity

- For events with an expected attendance of over 100 people, a public address system should be used to provide safety messages.
- Stewards and marshals should be able to communicate easily; radios or mobile phones should be used for smaller events. In the event of an emergency, effective communication is essential and should reflect the size of the event.
- A backup electricity supply is required for emergency lighting if the event is held when it's dark.

- Electrical equipment that overheats can cause fires. Faulty, damaged, exposed or badly maintained wires or incorrectly installed equipment can cause injury. A suitably qualified electrician should be used to ensure equipment used is safe and installed correctly.
- Equipment which is moved from place to place should be inspected frequently, including extension boxes and cables. Residual Current Devices should be used wherever possible.
- Fixed heating should be used rather than temporary portable heaters, but if they are necessary, portable heaters should be clear of inception hazards and in an area with good ventilation. A risk assessment of temporary heating facilities must be made by the organiser, as this type of heating may not be suitable in all circumstances, for example events where children or crowds could pass by and potentially knock the heater over.

Police and fire services

It's the organiser's responsibility to ensure that the police and fire services are aware of significant events taking place. The police and fire department will decide if they should be present depending on the size and type of event. They will be solely interested in the protection of lives and property, detection of crime, keeping the peace and traffic regulations. Marshalling is usually the preferred option used by most event organisers as the rescue services will sometimes charge for attendance. It's best to contact these authorities as soon as possible to discuss the need for their services.

Food, drink and catering services

Food Premises (Registration) Regulations 1991 relate to the requirement for registering food premises.

Professional caterers should be registered under the Food Safety Act and the organiser should request written evidence of this registration.

- The caterer must be registered with their local authority Environmental Health Department and let them know where the event will be held.

- Organisers must ensure that outside caterers use safe procedures regarding the use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for cooking operations. Matters to consider include operators having an understanding of its main characteristics and emergency procedures; limiting storage to 200kg or 24 hours' use, whichever is less; compliance with current regulations and codes of practice; and supplies being kept secure from interference.
- For some events it may be necessary to ask the fire service to carry out an inspection before the public enters to ensure the catering facilities are safe.

Marquee, tent erectors and temporary structures

- Any marquee, tent or temporary structure erected should be fit for purpose, in good condition and erected by a competent and reputable specialist company with separate insurance in place and proof obtained.
- A temporary structure which is load bearing must be compliant with Health and Safety legislation. It is essential to design and erect structures to suit the specific intended purpose – the key to the safety of such structures is in the choice of appropriate design and materials; correct siting and positioning; proper planning and control of work practices; and careful inspection of the finished product.
- Where banners and signs are being erected at height care should be taken that these are not only secured properly but that the volunteers or staff putting them in place are safe.
- A crowd assessment should be carried out to ensure the correct barriers and stands are used.
- Barriers and stands on the road must be approved by the Roads Authority.

Inflatable device operators

Inflatables can be hired with or without the operator being present. Ideally, these would be set up, operated and supervised by the hire company's own staff. A separate insurance policy must be in force to cover use during the specific event where the operator will be present. If the operator is not present, then the following risk management should be followed:

- The operator must give sufficient training and knowledge regarding the safe use/operation of the devices to those who will be responsible.
- It's essential for the safe operation of a device that the manufacturer's instructions are followed.
- The devices should be sited well away from possible hazards such as overhead power lines, fences or overhanging trees.
- Anchorage points should be used at all times. In high winds the inflatable should not be used.

- The operator will need to determine the maximum number of attendants needed to ensure the safe operation of the device.
- The operator must have controls in place to ensure:
 - safe and controlled access
 - the prevention of overloading the inflatable
 - use of the inflatable is restricted by age group of users, e.g. under 10 years of age only or restricted time slots for separate age groups. No adults should use the inflatable
 - no persons under the influence of alcohol and/or prescribed/unprescribed drugs or any other intoxicating substances use the equipment
 - no food or drinks are consumed on the inflatable
- All inflatable devices must be switched off and isolated when not being used, to prevent unsupervised use.

For further information on the factors contributing to accidents and the precautions to avoid them, see <http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/fairgrounds/inflatables.htm>

Fireworks

Displays should be fired only by experienced and well-trained operators, who have visited the venue, assessed the risks and agreed that it is safe. Consideration must be given to the spectator area; where the audience stands; the safety zone to protect the spectators; a space where people are not allowed to go; the firing area; where the fireworks are; the fall-out area; where the debris from the fireworks falls; and the bonfire. The space required for a fireworks display varies according to the material being fired and the size of the display. If fireworks are to be stored onsite, the Fire Authority should be consulted. The HSE has published guidance to support competent display operators and organisations possessing specialist knowledge and requisite training – Working together on firework displays: A guide to safety for firework display organisers and operators HSG123.

If the charity is carrying out the operation of a few fireworks to mark the end of a festival or fete, however, then they must demonstrate that public safety has been well thought out and planned.

The HSE has published guidance for people running firework displays who set off fireworks themselves, but have no specialist knowledge: **Giving your own fireworks display HSG124**. This document sets out the main points to consider – selecting a site; provision of site facilities; storing fireworks safely; crowd control; bonfire safety; firing the display; and clearing up after the display.

Sale of goods at jumble sales/fetes

It probably won't be practical to have electrical and gas appliances inspected at these events, so it's better to refuse donations of these goods. A general safety check should be

made of all items by a responsible person. If in doubt the items shouldn't be sold. Organisations can contact their local trading standards service for more advice.

Walks, runs and bicycle races

- Routes should be examined beforehand and a full risk assessment carried out. Hazards such as debris should be removed, and defects in the road or path should be noted and a marshal should be in attendance in those areas at all times.
- Preference would be for events to occur in closed private or local authority recreation parks rather than on public roads.
- Organisers must be aware of the number of participants and estimated attendance number of members of the public, to adequately marshal the event.
- Road closures are desirable rather than open roads, particularly if children and bicycles will be involved.
- Metal barriers or bollards are recommended to be used to separate participants from the traffic.
- If in quiet rural areas assessments should be made taking into account bus routes, commercial traffic and the proximity to tourist areas. Bollards should be used to provide separation if required.
- Warning signs for both competitors and traffic should be used, but these must comply with Traffic Signs regulations. The Safety of Street Works code of practice guidance should be followed when using barriers, cones and flashing lamps and when setting out signs.
- Adequate water should be supplied throughout the route, not just at the beginning or end of the race. Rest stations should also be clearly marked and officials clearly identifiable.
- If money is going to be collected at the event, a local authority permit must be granted.

Crowd control issues

A safe and trouble-free event requires good planning from an early stage. Organisers need to ensure that precautions to manage crowds are adequate and appropriate for the numbers expected, and the type of visitor.

- **Planning** – involves getting background information to enable both thinking ahead and assessing risks and allows for time to develop and modify plans.
- **Assessing risks** – the systematic identification of hazards which could affect crowd safety (e.g. surging and swaying) will in turn estimate the size of the problem and lead on to decisions about what to do to address crowd safety. Depending on the outcome of the risk assessment, plans may need to be modified.

- **Practical precautions** – these need to include arrangements for the selection and training of staff.
- **Emergency planning and procedures** – organisers need to consider issues relevant to the safe management of crowds in the event of an emergency e.g. due to fire or bomb threat. Such plans are very important as an emergency could involve rapid large-scale movement of people with the potential for overcrowding.
- **Communication** – good communication is particularly important in the safe management of crowds. Provision of clear, unambiguous information to visitors can prevent dangerous situations arising. Good communication between staff assists in the rapid and appropriate response if problems arise.
- **Monitoring** – this is important to make sure plans are implemented correctly. Where crowd activity could develop into hazardous overcrowding, monitoring should be in place to identify potential problems and quickly address them. A formal review of the crowd safety systems may include a debrief after an event; an investigation after a crowd-related incident; or a scheduled routine examination.
- **Reviewing** – one-off events or the regular review of safety measures provides important feedback for improving crowd safety standards and checking that the precautions currently followed continue to be appropriate.

Camping and accommodation

There are a number of different types of camping accommodation provision during events. Examples include:

- restricted/limited to participants and volunteers
- wider accommodation where most people attending the event stay on site, e.g. people attending a music festival. Please note that the profile of the crowd is a factor in determining the risks involved
- special accommodation – where camping is the main aim of the event, e.g. caravan club rally

The camping aspect of an event needs to be based on proper planning, with camping being incorporated as part of the event planning to ensure an adequate level of services and facilities are available for the whole duration of the camping event. Services provided for people who are camping include fire precautions, stewarding, medical facilities, water supplies, etc.

The planning needs to take account of the following: site densities; segregation of vehicles/live-in vehicles; the provision of information; organisation and supervision; contingency planning; public health (personal hygiene and food safety considerations); crime; fire safety; site services; first aid; welfare (including communication and availability of information on lost children/friends etc.); telephones; sanitary facilities; refuse; site lighting; access; and noise.

Events in or near water

Any event involving water creates an increased risk not just to participants but to spectators as well. It's important that organisers can demonstrate superior control procedures to prevent the risk of drowning incidents. Some water activities such as jet-skiing and speed boat racing can be particularly hazardous. Sailing and canoeing can still be dangerous, but the risk will very much depend on the experience of the participants, the speed of the water and the temperature of the water.

Sadly, even those who can swim and are in close proximity to the riverbank can still drown under certain conditions. Makeshift floats for 'fun raft races' are particularly hazardous due to the safety aspect of the craft.

Some activities may fall under the requirements of the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004, depending on the way charges/donations are made, and may require that a licence holder is appointed to lead the activity.

Information is available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/>

The site provides clear advice on personal buoyancy in recreational sports, improvised raft building and the Glasby protocol in relation to canoeing and kayaking. The British Canoe Union and Royal Yachting Association are also good sources of advice. If you are in any doubt, you are advised to contact the Adventure Activities Licensing Service at info@aals.org.uk or by telephoning **0292 075 5715**.

Landowners are highly likely to want to avoid responsibility for events on their private waterways but may be happy to hold such an event if the organiser obtains insurance elsewhere.

- The skills and knowledge of the user are an important issue.
- Organisers should seek advice from sailing club representatives on all aspects of safety.
- Marshals should be used to monitor the safety and location of participants at all times. The lack of adequate supervision is a major cause of drowning incidents.
- Life jackets should be worn by participants at all times.
- Emergency and rescue services will need to be involved at an early stage to allow for adequate planning of specialist rescue equipment.
- First aid facilities are required onsite and suitable safety boats should be on standby.
- Involvement of the Environment Agency is recommended as they may require special precautions and safety measures.
- The largest number of drowning incidents comes from people falling in accidentally. Warning signs and barriers should be used if large crowds are expected by the riverbank.
- The second highest number of drowning incidents recorded is where there has been alcohol consumed in the vicinity – good supervision by the riverbanks or lakes should be organised.

- Consideration needs to be given to the profile of the crowd. If lots of children are likely to be involved, then a communication system should be used to speak to the crowds about the dangers, so parents are fully aware.

Challenging events, stunts or extreme sports

The most common of the challenging extreme stunts are likely to be bungee jumping, bed pushes, truck pulls, motorcycle stunt racing and parachute jump. These all involve a high degree of risk. Large numbers of spectators in the vicinity of where challenging and dangerous stunts are taking place are also an issue.

Human error involving bungee jumping has been widely documented, even where the most reputable companies are used to operate the equipment. Failure of the cord or human error in calculating distances or weights can have catastrophic results.

Ensure that bungee jumping operators belong to a reputable association that can meet the British Elastic Rope Sports Association (BERSA) Code of Safe Practice. Pre-booking is recommended for those wishing to take part in bungee jumping and this should be discussed with the bungee jumping operator. In particular, advertising in advance of the event may need to be considered.

Similar considerations should be taken for other similar events/activities.

Traffic management

Traffic management proposals need to be planned to provide safe and convenient site access and to minimise off-site traffic disruption. It is advisable to set down traffic management proposals in a traffic management plan and to agree this with the local Highways Authority and police where the event is likely to have a wider impact outside of the site.

Matters to consider will include traffic signs and possible road closures, traffic marshalling, public transport services, vehicle parking and management (in particular vehicular access, parking, emergency access), pedestrians and how they will enter and leave the site, and segregation from vehicle movements, on-site vehicle management and temporary roadways, lift trucks and other vehicles involved with running the event (e.g. equipment and refreshment deliveries, waste collection vehicles etc).