

Safety at Sports Grounds Policy

Prepared by:
Safety Advisory Group, on behalf of
Planning, Development & Regulatory Services
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Reading RG1 2LU
Tel: 0118 937 2424

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1.0 Policy

1.1 It is the policy of Reading Borough Council to seek to ensure the reasonable safety of spectators attending any sports ground within the Borough. In undertaking this duty, the Council works in partnership with Reading Football Club, the emergency services, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority and the supporters group to promote a culture of safety at sports grounds.

2.0 Context

2.1 Reading Borough Council recognises its statutory duty for the safety certification of sports grounds under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (as amended) (1975 Act) and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 (1987 Act), (hereafter referred to as 'the Acts') and its responsibilities for the monitoring and enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in respect of sports grounds.

3.0 Scope of this policy

3.1 Reading Borough Council has the statutory duty under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (as amended):

- To issue a General Safety Certificate for each designated sports ground within the Borough, containing "such terms and conditions as the local authority consider necessary or expedient to secure reasonable safety at the sports ground"
- To serve a prohibition notice in respect of a sports ground if the Authority considers that "the admission of spectators to a sports ground involves or will involve a risk to them so serious that, until steps have been taken to reduce it to a reasonable level, admission of spectators to the ground or that part of the ground ought to be prohibited or restricted". It is important to note that this duty applies to any sports ground, not just those which are designated or have a regulated stand.
- To issue a Special Safety Certificate where required.

3.2 Fire Safety and Safety at Places of Sports Act 1987:

- To issue a General Safety Certificate for each regulated stand within the Borough, containing "such terms and conditions as the local authority consider necessary or expedient to secure the reasonable safety in the Stand when it is in use for viewing the specified activity or activities at the Ground".

3.3 Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

- To enforce the Order, and regulations made under it, in relation to designated sports grounds and regulated stands.
- Under the Licensing Act 2003, where applications for, or variations to, premises licences are made by a designated sports ground or one with a regulated stand, Reading Borough Council will be consulted as the responsible authority for fire safety.

4.0 The sports grounds covered by this policy are:

- Reading Football Club Ltd, Madjeski Stadium
- Regulated stand at Palmer Park Stadium
- Any sports grounds in the Borough of Reading which gives rise to serious concerns about spectator safety.

5.0 Principles and Commitments

Reading Borough Council, working in conjunction with partner agencies, endeavours to ensure the reasonable safety of spectators attending any sports ground determined by the Acts in Reading.

In undertaking its role in respect of safety at sports grounds, the Council will:

- Seek to ensure that a reasonable standard of spectator safety is maintained at all sports grounds but particularly those, which are designated or have regulated stands within the Borough of Reading.
- Encourage and promote a safety culture within sports grounds in the Borough of Reading.
- Delegate its power to take and implement decisions on safety certification to a designated council officer
- Appoint a lead council officer to chair the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) for each sports ground subject to a safety certificate
- Provide for adequate resources and appoint appropriate council officers as necessary to assist the council in carrying out its statutory duties relating to the safety of spectators at sports grounds under the 1975 and 1987 Acts, and the 2005 Order
- Convene regular SAG meetings to assist in its statutory duty to sports grounds, whose membership will include representatives of the police, fire service, ambulance service, relevant certificate holder and relevant council officers and invite the Sports Grounds Safety Authority where applicable.
- Determine if any sports grounds contain regulated stands and expediently process and issue safety certificates in respect of those stands and any sports grounds designated by the secretary of state under the provisions of the 1975 Act
- Put in place policies and procedures for monitoring, by inspection and audit, compliance with the terms and conditions of any safety certificate issued and taking appropriate and proportional action in response to any identified defect or incident compromising spectator safety

- Provide prompt advice on spectator safety on request from sports ground venue operators, and
- Keep under review its procedures and arrangements in pursuit of ensuring the reasonable safety of spectators at sports grounds within its responsibility.

6.0 Key actions to meet the commitments set out in the policy

6.1 Delegated powers

The Council has delegated its powers for the safety certification of sports grounds and the appointment of inspectors under the 1975 Act and 1987 Act and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to the:

Head of Planning, Development & Regulatory Services.

The Head of Service has delegated day to day responsibility to the Regulatory Services manager, who is nominated as the designated officer for safety at sports grounds, lead officer and chair of the Safety Advisory Group.

6.2 Consultation

In imposing terms and conditions for spectator safety (such as when issuing or amending General or Special Safety Certificates), Reading Borough Council is legally required to consult with Thames Valley Police, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service and the building authority.

South Central Ambulance Service, although not a statutory consultee, is in practice also consulted as are other core members as detailed in the SAG Terms of Reference.

6.3 Suitably trained and competent staff

Individual officers who are responsible for the issue and review of safety certificates and the undertaking of inspection and enforcement duties under the 1975 and 1987 Acts will be suitably trained and qualified to ensure their competency.

The Council will ensure that:

Duties are specified in job descriptions and experience is built up over time with provision made in individual appraisals for monitoring progress.

All officers undertaking the above duties have professional qualifications, experience in other sectors and are on CPD cycles as well as regular participation in sports grounds work and SAGs, and appropriate succession planning is in place to ensure that staff have the necessary training and experience to carry out the roles they may be expected to undertake.

Officers involved in safety at sports grounds will be given the opportunity to share information with, and learn from, others through participation in the South West Regional Group.

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