



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

Paper 000/00

11 September 2015

NIAR 522-15

Dr Dan Hull

Use of the pitch in the Green and the Red Guides

1 Summary

The Green and the Red Guides are in agreement in providing two separate forms of guidance regarding use of the pitch in emergency situations.

Both state that for new constructions, while in practice the pitch can be used to evacuate spectators, it should not be used when calculating the emergency evacuation time. That is, there should be sufficient capacity within the stairways, concourses and other routes for spectators to exit in an emergency without the pitch having to be used in that calculation.

However, both guides also state that the pitch can be used as a place of 'reasonable' (in the Green Guide) or a 'comparative' (in the Red Guide) place of safety. This means that the pitch can be used for up to 30 minutes in the event of an emergency, provided that it is constructed and surrounded in a way which offers 'some protection from the effects of fire and smoke'.

A reasonable or comparative place of safety is distinct from a 'place of safety', which is a final destination of safety 'at no immediate danger from the effects of fire'.

2 The Green Guide

2.1 Use of the pitch as part of the emergency evacuation route

The *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds* (otherwise known as the 'Green Guide')¹ states that:

For new construction: while in practice spectators may evacuate onto the pitch or area of activity in an emergency, this should not form part of the calculation of the emergency evacuation time for newly constructed grounds or sections of grounds².

Further on in the guide it is stated that,

As stated in Section 10.9, for new construction, the use of the pitch or area of activity for emergency evacuation should not form part of the capacity calculation³.

2.2 Use of the pitch as a place of reasonable safety

However, the Green Guide also states that a 'place of reasonable safety' may include,

The pitch or area of activity. As stated in Section 10.13, however, this should be considered only in certain circumstances and only after consultation with the authority responsible for enforcing fire safety legislation⁴.

A 'place of reasonable safety' is defined in the Green Guide as,

A place within a building or structure where, for a limited period of time, people will have some protection from the effects of fire and smoke.

A place of reasonable safety 'will normally have a minimum of 30 minutes fire resistance and allow people to continue their escape to a place of safety'.

There is an important distinction between a place of reasonable safety and a 'place of safety'. A place of safety is defined in the Green Guide as,

A place, away from the building, in which people are at no immediate danger from the effects of fire.

In this particular regard, no distinction is made in the Green Guide between new or old constructions. Hence, the pitch within a new stadium may be used as a place of *reasonable* safety for up to 30 minutes in the event of an emergency.

¹ Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: <http://nia1.me/2mr>

² The Green Guide, as above: paragraph 10.9: p85.

³ The Green Guide, as above: paragraph 10.13: p87.

⁴ The Green Guide, as above: paragraph 15.16: p153.

3 The Red Guide

The *Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds* (otherwise known as the 'Red Guide')⁵ is essentially in agreement with the two forms of guidance provided in the Green Guide, but uses slightly different wording.

3.1 Use of the pitch as part of the emergency evacuation route

It states in the Red Guide that,

In certain cases, forward evacuation onto the pitch or area of activity may form part of the emergency evacuation route, provided that it leads directly to an exit which itself leads to a place of safety⁶.

However, the Red Guide also makes it clear that such use of the pitch should not be assumed during the calculation of emergency exiting capacity:

While in practice, spectators may evacuate onto the pitch or area of activity in an emergency, this should not form part of the calculation of the emergency evacuation time for grounds or sections of grounds. The pitch should be available for forward evacuation as a place of comparative safety in an emergency⁷.

3.2 Use of the pitch as a place of comparative safety

The Red Guide makes a similar distinction to the Green Guide between a final 'place of safety' ('a place which people can reach safely via the escape route, and which will be safe from the effects of fire. It may be a road, walkway or open space adjacent to, or even within the boundaries of, the sports ground') and a 'comparative' place of safety.

A comparative place of safety is described as follows:

Within a large sports ground there may also be a need to designate a place or places of comparative safety where people can be safe from the effects of fire for 30 minutes or more, thus allowing extra time for them to move directly to a place of safety.

Such places of comparative safety may include:

- a. an exit route that is protected throughout its length by a construction having a fire resistance of one hour*
- b. a stairway that is in the open air and protected from fire breaking out onto or below it*

⁵ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast.

⁶ The Red Guide, as above: paragraph 9.12: p89.

⁷ The Red Guide, as above: paragraph 9.9: p88.

- c. *the pitch or area of activity. As stated in Section 9.12, however, this should be considered only in certain circumstances and only after consultation with the fire authority.*⁸

⁸ The Red Guide, as above: paragraph 15.16: p190.