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Responsibility for emergency planning at sports stadia

1 Summary

- This paper examines which agencies have primary responsibility for emergency planning at sports grounds, as stated in the 'Green Guide', the 'Red Guide', and the more recent *Safety Management* guide published by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority.
- According to these three guides, the contingency plan covers the action to be taken in response to incidents occurring at the sports ground which might prejudice public safety or disrupt normal operations. The contingency plan is the responsibility of ground management.
- The emergency plan, which deals with a major incident occurring at the sports ground or in the vicinity, is the responsibility of the emergency services along with the local authority.
- The site traffic management plan, prepared by ground management, should co-ordinate with the local authority's overall traffic management plan for the adjoining areas.
- In terms of an emergency evacuation plan, no specific guidance on this is provided; the Green and Red Guides provide instruction on the calculation of, and arrangements for, emergency evacuation. However, both guides suggest that 'emergency evacuation' be included as a section or heading within the contingency plan.

2 Background

Responsibilities for emergency planning at sports stadia are set out in the UK *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*¹ (the 'Green Guide') and in the Northern Ireland *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*² (the 'Red Guide'). The Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) has also produced a shorter guide, *Safety Management*, which:

*...amplifies the advice on safety management contained in the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds ('the Green Guide'). It will also assist ground management draw up an operations manual setting out both its standard operating procedures for the normal running of the sports ground and its special operating procedures to deal with events that may interrupt the standard procedures*³.

Both the Green Guide and the Red Guide state the principle that safety responsibility, in general terms, lies with the management authority of the sports ground:

*Responsibility for the safety of the spectators lies at all times with the ground management, and, where appropriate, with any organisers or promoters of the fixture or event*⁴.

However, it is also recognised that management cannot achieve a safe environment alone:

*Representatives of the district council, together with police, fire and ambulance officers, will advise management on how to discharge its responsibility, and, in certain circumstances, may require measures to be taken to achieve reasonable safety standards. This does not, however, exonerate the ground management from its responsibility for the safety of spectators*⁵.

The Red Guide, the Green Guide and the SGSA *Safety Management* guide each provide some demarcation in terms of responsibility for specific aspects of safety planning at sports grounds.

The following sections deal with two related, but distinct, aspects of safety planning: the contingency plan and the emergency plan. It also describes the nature of responsibility for a traffic management plan.

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

² Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast

³ Sports Grounds safety Authority. 2009. *Safety Management: a Good Practice Guide to all Aspects of Safety Management at Sports Grounds*. London: p1.

⁴ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: pxxi.

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

3 The Contingency Plan

This plan is defined in the Red Guide and the Green Guide as follows:

A contingency plan is prepared by the ground management setting out the action to be taken in response to incidents occurring at the venue which might prejudice public safety or disrupt normal operations (for example, the loss of power to CCTV or PA systems)⁶.

The SGSA *Sports Management* guide adds:

Contingency plans should cover any potential incident, whether large or small, that may require the implementation of special arrangements⁷.

All three guides make it very clear that responsibility for preparing this plan lies with ground management.

3.1 Purpose

The contingency plan serves two purposes:⁸

- To enable management to respond to incidents which can be dealt with by management's own resources, such as safety officers and stewards, without having to call on additional help; and
- To enable management to deal with the early stage of incidents which require a greater response than they can provide from their own resources and to work effectively with the emergency services when they arrive.

3.2 Content

In terms of their content, both the Red and Green Guides state that:

Contingency plans should lay down a structured and graduated response with clear guidelines on the measures to be adopted in particular circumstances, bearing in mind both internal and external factors specific to the individual sports ground⁹.

While the details of these plans may vary according to the specific sports ground, its location and the nature of the matches or events being staged, both guides suggest that the following headings may be considered when preparing contingency plans:¹⁰

⁶ Sports Ground Safety Authority. 2009. *Safety Management*. London: p.63
 Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: p.209 <http://nia1.me/2mr>
 Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.268

⁷ Sports Ground Safety Authority. 2009. *Safety Management*. London: p.44

⁸ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.22

⁹ Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: p.33 <http://nia1.me/2mr>
 Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.22

¹⁰ Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: p.33 <http://nia1.me/2mr>
 Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.23

- Fire;
- Bomb threat, suspect package, terrorist attack;
- Buildings and services;
- Safety equipment failure;
- Crowd control;
- Emergency evacuation;
- Severe adverse weather;
- Ticketing strategy in the event of an abandoned fixture; and
- Features/considerations specific to the location.

4 The Emergency Plan

Both the Red Guide and the Green Guide state that the emergency services are responsible for developing and implementing the emergency plan:

An emergency plan is prepared and owned by the emergency services for dealing with a major incident at the venue or in the vicinity (for example, an explosion, toxic release or large fire). Also known as an emergency procedure plan, or major incident plan¹¹.

The definition provided in the more recent SGSA *Safety Management* guide diverges slightly, in that it also extends responsibility for the preparation and ownership of the emergency plan to the local authority.¹²

4.1 Content

The Red Guide states that the emergency plan should include responses to:¹³

- Incidents inside the ground;
- Incidents and responses in the immediate vicinity of the ground; and
- Incidents involving spectators on their way to or from an event.

Specifically, the plan should cover the following issues:¹⁴

- Traffic management around a ground (including ensuring a clear route in and out for emergency services);
- Routes for spectators on foot; and
- Crowd management procedures outside the ground.

¹¹ Sports Ground Safety Authority. 2009. *Safety Management*. London: p.63

Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: p.209 <http://nia1.me/2mr>

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.269

¹² Sports Ground Safety Authority. 2009. *Safety Management*. London: p.63

¹³ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.25

¹⁴ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.25

The Green Guide recommends that the emergency plan (which it refers to as a ‘major incident plan’) should also identify:¹⁵

- Areas for dealing with multiple casualties; and
- Access and egress routes and a rendezvous point, for emergency vehicles.

The Red Guide advises that the emergency plan should be based on the normal events and regular crowd size for the venue and that the following factors should be taken into consideration when preparing the plan:¹⁶

- The nature of the ground;
- The events for which it is normally used;
- The number of spectators who regularly attend; and
- The risks associated with normal operation.

The Cabinet Office has produced extensive guidance to accompany Part 1 of the *Civil Contingency Act 2004* and *The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) Regulations 2005*.¹⁷ Chapter five of this guidance concerns the preparation of emergency plans and advises how such plans should be laid out (see Appendix 1).¹⁸ In Northern Ireland, the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch¹⁹ of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) has also published guidance on preparing emergency plans.²⁰

4.2 Preparation

As stated above, the guidance is clear that responsibility for preparing this plan lies with the emergency services.

The Red Guide goes further, stipulating that:

*Each of the emergency services, and any other agency which would respond to an emergency at the ground, will need to have their own, single-agency emergency plan, which they would prepare in consultation with ground management.*²¹

As the plan prepared by the local emergency services must be compatible with both the ground contingency plans and the medical plan²², the Green Guide advises that:

¹⁵ Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: p.183 <http://nia1.me/2mr>

¹⁶ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.25

¹⁷ Cabinet Office. 2011. *Emergency Preparedness (Revised Version)*. London. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-preparedness>

¹⁸ Cabinet Office. 2011. *Emergency Preparedness (Revised Version)* Chapter 5 (Emergency Planning). London: p.46

¹⁹ The Civil Contingencies Policy Branch of OFMDFM works across the public sector to promote and encourage the development of effective emergency preparedness to mitigate the effects of a civil emergency on the public and the environment. <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/making-government-work/civil-contingencies.htm>

²⁰ OFMDFM. 2002. *A Guide to Plan Preparation*. Belfast. <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/planpreparation.pdf>

²¹ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.25

²² Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: p.33, p.183 <http://nia1.me/2mr>

Consultation must therefore take place between ground management, the police, fire and ambulance services, the local health authority and local authority in order to produce an agreed plan of action, including access for emergency vehicles, for all foreseeable incidents²³.

Following a similar theme, the *Safety Management* guide recommends that ground management discuss their contingency plans with:

The local authority emergency planning department, the emergency responders and other relevant agencies to ensure that there is no confusion or conflict about their respective roles and plans²⁴.

The Red Guide actually recommends that a multi-agency approach be adopted in formulating emergency plans for designated grounds in Northern Ireland. It states that the plan should be prepared by a group which would normally include the emergency services, ground management and the district council. This multi-agency group would usually be led by the police, but the Guide allows for another key player to take on this role (by agreement). It advises that the required liaison between ground management, the emergency services and district councils can be achieved by holding multi-agency planning meetings at regular intervals.²⁵

In the following instances, the Red Guide requires ground management to notify the emergency services about changes in circumstances which may have an impact on the services' resource arrangements or emergency plan:²⁶

- If any significant changes are made to the structure or management practices of the ground;
- If the number of spectators at an event (regardless of the nature of the event) is expected to exceed 5,000;²⁷ and
- If ground management believe that a particular event poses a different or significant risk from those provided for in the plan and that an event-specific emergency plan is required.²⁸

²³ Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: p.33, p.183
<http://nia1.me/2mr>

²⁴ Sports Grounds safety Authority. 2009. *Safety Management: a Good Practice Guide to all Aspects of Safety Management at Sports Grounds*. London: p.43

²⁵ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.25

²⁶ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.25

²⁷ The Red Guide states that ground management should inform the PSNI, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, so that they can make the appropriate resource arrangements. Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.25

²⁸ The Red Guide requires that the emergency services and (where appropriate) the district council be notified as far in advance as possible. Ground management should then convene a multi-agency meeting to discuss the appropriate arrangements and the contingency and emergency plans to be made. Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.25

4.3 Implementation

While the Green Guide states that the emergency plan is “owned by the emergency services”²⁹, it is not prescriptive in terms of which service should take overall responsibility for implementing the plan.³⁰

The Red Guide provides some guidance on this issue, stating that:

*The lead emergency service, which will normally be the police, is responsible for co-ordinating the overall response*³¹.

5 Site Traffic Management Plan

The Green Guide addresses the need to prepare a site traffic management plan, noting that:

*Management should ensure that its site traffic plan co-ordinates with the local authority’s overall traffic management plan for the adjoining areas. The traffic management plan should also cover staff training and personal protective equipment*³².

The SGSA *Safety Management* guide also assigns responsibility for the preparation of a traffic management plan to ground management. However, the SGSA guide makes a distinction between the ‘on-site traffic management plan’, which is the responsibility of ground management, and an ‘off-site travel or traffic management plan’ which may be required by the planning authority or under other legislation.³³

The SGSA guide also provides some detail on the matters that should be considered when formulating an on-site traffic management plan. It notes that the plan should identify the hazards associated with vehicular movements within confined spaces where there are large numbers of pedestrians. It advises that the following factors should be taken into account when preparing the plan:³⁴

- Identification of emergency services’ rendezvous points;
- Identification and maintenance of emergency vehicle routes;
- Location and number of disabled car parking spaces;

²⁹ Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: p.33 <http://nia1.me/2mr>

³⁰ However, the Guide does state that, in the event of a major incident, the senior ambulance service NHS trust officer will assume command of all medical, ambulance and first aid staff. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: p.183 <http://nia1.me/2mr>

³¹ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.25

³² Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2008. *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. London: p.39 <http://nia1.me/2mr>

The Red Guide requires ground management to draw up a written safety policy and contingency plans and to agree an emergency plan and a statement of intent, but makes no reference to the preparation of a traffic management plan.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2007. *The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds*. Belfast: p.16

³³ Sports Grounds safety Authority. 2009. *Safety Management: a Good Practice Guide to all Aspects of Safety Management at Sports Grounds*. London: p.26

³⁴ Sports Grounds safety Authority. 2009. *Safety Management: a Good Practice Guide to all Aspects of Safety Management at Sports Grounds*. London: p.27

- Segregation arrangements:
 - Pedestrians from vehicles;
 - General public from performers, officials, VIPs etc.;
 - Rival groups of supporters;
- Location of television outside broadcast vehicles and equipment compound;
- Public coach parking facilities;
- Team/VIP coach parking arrangements;
- Access to site for authorised vehicles required to service the event (including waste management, hygiene contractors and catering suppliers);
- Staffing:
 - Training of car park staff;
 - Personal protective equipment;
 - Communications;
- Egress and dispersal of spectators.

Appendix 1

Cabinet Office Guidance on Presentation of an Emergency Plan³⁵

SECTION	CONTENT	SUMMARY
General Information	A short, overall description of the plan and its purpose. Some reference to the risk assessment on which the plan is based (with more detail as necessary in an annex)	Why the plan is needed.
Management, Control and Co-ordination	Control arrangements. The main elements of the plan in a hierarchy of importance. The main emergency teams, their roles and responsibilities. The key concepts, doctrine and terminology. The main facilities, locations and communications.	How the plan works Who has a role in the plan.
Activation, including alert and standby	The procedures for alerting, placing on standby and then activating the key teams named in the Control and Co-ordination section. This includes the procedure for determining when an emergency has occurred.	When the plan is activated.
Action	Specific actions to be undertaken, as their contribution to the overall response, by the key organisations, divisions, departments and officers in the hierarchy. Key officer checklists can be abstracted from here.	What the plan says will be done and by whom.
Annexes	Call-out lists (related to the key teams). Resource lists. Further information, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more on the risk assessment, as necessary; and • a policy statement on carrying out training and exercises. 	Who has a role in the plan – contact details.

³⁵ Cabinet Office. 2011. *Emergency Preparedness (Revised Version)* Chapter 5 (Emergency Planning). London: p.46