

# Risk Management Guidelines

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## A Guide to Supervision of Social Activities in the Sports Industry

### Introduction

The sports, recreation and activities sector has clear awareness of the need to provide personal challenge through sporting activities whilst at the same time tempering this against the need for effective safety management. The sector can demonstrate a good track record in this respect through its providers, lead bodies, councils and clubs.

Despite this there has been a number of serious accidents “off the field” which has demonstrated that more could be done to manage safety on the social side of sporting activity where there is no less a “duty of care”. This Guidance aims to highlight this issue and offer simple and effective solutions with the aim of reducing risk.

### What is in it for the Sports Industry?

Serious accidents can be life changing not only for those suffering injury but for those having to deal with incidents. They often damage the reputation of the sporting organisation and can result in less participation and support where there is perceived lack of control. There are consequential increasing insurance premiums for everyone especially difficult for those organisations struggling to maintain adequate funding. Accidents can mean loss for everyone involved. There few if any accidents which can be considered “just bad luck”, “unfortunate” or the result of folly and negligence of the individual. The vast majority of accidents can be effectively prevented.

### Duty of Care

It is incumbent on all those promoting and offering sporting and adventure training opportunities to look after all persons whether they are participants, instructors, support staff, volunteers or observers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, their health safety and welfare.

Sporting activities are often well regulated in this respect but associated and consequential activities, which might include social and fundraising events, prize giving’s, down time between sporting events and heats, travel, tournaments by teams and individuals, are not always considered in respect to common and civil law duty of care.

This duty, encompasses all persons who might be associated with activities whether sport or social related, such as participants, spectators, coaches, instructors, volunteers, contractors, visitors and guests and also members of the public.

In terms of criminal liability the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Section 2, states that “it shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, to protect the health, safety and welfare of all his employees”. It is also an absolute duty under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, for employers to carry out assessments of the risks in workplaces under their control. This guidance recommends that all aspects of sporting activities including those mentioned above are effectively managed through the risk assessment process.

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## Recent Serious Accidents – A New Trend

In recent years there has been a trend toward serious accidents in activities associated with, but not as a direct consequence of sporting activities. These serious accidents have resulted in life changing injuries and multi-million pound settlement claims. The distress caused to all those involved including the organisers and sports body, has also been considerable.

In most cases it was felt that more could have been done to prevent these incidents adding to the stress and anxiety of those involved. Should this trend continue it is possible that the associated sports could suffer and further compound the calls for more draconian safety measures which recent reports such as the Lord Young Review have been trying to resist.

These incidents have in common their occurrence during “down time” outside of the sporting /adventure training activity. Contributing factors include:

- Alcohol
- Bravado and bad behaviour
- Environmental hazard not appreciated as risks e.g. water courses
- Circumstances not thought to need control or supervision

They differ in cause but their common opportunities for prevention are three fold:

1. Acceptance of the responsibility for risk of injury extends beyond core sporting activities
2. Effective control of those involved through supervision by suitably briefed and responsible persons

3. The need for simple risk assessment in common with normal safety management practice

**If these measures were to be effectively applied then it is more likely that the majority of serious accidents could be prevented.**

The Lord Young Review emphasises the need for a return to “common sense” and highlights that not all accidents can be blamed on someone and accidents should not always result in someone paying compensation. It is hoped in time that this approach will be clarified by future court decisions.

The potential for contributory negligence must be acknowledged for those suffering injury as a result accidents where event/ activity organisers can demonstrate that they did all that is reasonably practicable to prevent accidents. Such contributory negligence is likely to affect the opportunity for compensation claims, especially if there is evidence of failure by the claimant to follow safety measures and instructions required by supervisory staff.

RSA will cover all reasonable compensation claims under its policies but expects a reasonable level of supervision and management of activities outside of the core sporting activity. This will enable the strongest possible defence of claims when this is deemed appropriate.

## Effective Control Measures

**Supervision** – All activities associated with sports, recreation and associated activities needs a reasonable level of supervisory management and control. Supervisors may be designated instructors, volunteers or support staff.

They must have the strength of character and authority to be able to intervene at appropriate times to control bravado or

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adverse behaviour which might lead to accidents. They need training or briefing to be able to apply effective management to the activity. They will be aware of the key hazards and risks associated with the event. A person in this role is acting on behalf of the club or organisation and in delegating your authority for this duty you must ensure the individuals know what is expected of them. They must be briefed and have full awareness of the main hazards and risks identified for the activity or event in question. If you fail in this key task the possibility the event will run safely is likely to be more due to good fortune than good planning.

**Safe Environment** – Environmental factors which might contribute to accidents outside of sporting activities are many and varied. They might include topographical features outdoors such as elevated locations, nearby roads and traffic or railways, watercourses including rivers, canals, lakes and ponds and underwater hazards including depth, flow/current/tides, mud banks etc. The weather also has a role to play whether travelling to venues or events or hosting events in extremes of heat and cold. The potential effects of altitude might be a further consideration.

Where premises are used hazards might include physical conditions in respect to maintenance and design, lighting levels, extreme changes in level and protection measures, capacity issues and fire precautions including means of escape considerations, window safety, balconies and glazing issues etc. The list is not exhaustive. Much depends on the social activities planned and the potential hazards and risks evident. Much of it should be common sense.

**Alcohol Challenges** – It is recognised that club, tour and event activities outside of port can often be centred on socialising and

relaxing with alcohol. Safety risks are compounded by inhibition and over-indulgence and when combined with key risks such as water course, falls from heights and other often obvious hazards, they can be a lethal combination.

Designated supervisors must anticipate and recognise this potential and do their utmost to support responsible behaviour and responsible drinking.

The key issue which can result in serious accidents is the combination effect of alcohol, unforeseen environmental factors and the failure to plan or the effect of a change of plan. Impromptu activities which often end up poorly managed and supervised are also a recipe for incidents. It should be acknowledged that the vast majority will not result in any incident causing injury but a few minutes thought by someone with experience will often make the difference in keeping all activities safe.

**Risk Assessment is the key to ensuring hazards, persons at risk and control measures are identified and implemented.**

An assessment is no more than a careful examination of what conditions or practices at the event of activity could cause harm to people. Adequate assessments will enable you to determine if sufficient precautions have been taken or if more can be done to prevent harm. The aim of assessments is to prevent injury or illness.

## Action Plan

Once all the hazards and risks have been taken account of it is essential that a clear and simple plan should be developed which forms the basis of protecting everyone involved in the event/activity. This will need to take account of first aid and response to any incident should it be needed. All supervisory staff must be appraised of it and their role and responsibility in case of incidents.

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## How to Assess the Risks in Activities Associated With Sport

There are five basic steps:

<p><b>1) <i>Look for the hazards</i></b></p>	<p>Ignore the trivia and concentrate on significant hazards e.g. Potential for falls from height, water courses, crowd control, barriers, separation of traffic, potential for power failure, electrical hazards, equipment fixed to prevent collapse, alcohol use in combination with above etc.</p>
<p><b>2) <i>Decide who may be harmed and how</i></b></p>	<p>Participants, instructors, volunteers, visitors and guests, cleaners, contractors, members of the public.</p>
<p><b>3) <i>Evaluate the risks</i></b></p>	<p>Consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm. Decide whether, after all precautions have been taken, significant risks remain and whether the existing precautions are adequate. For example level of supervision, adequate briefing etc</p>
<p><b>4) <i>Record findings</i></b></p>	<p>The Risk Assessment must be suitable and sufficient. In addition a simple record of most important and key findings will demonstrate efforts to prevent accidents and support the review the assessments.</p>
<p><b>5) <i>Review assessment and revise it if necessary</i></b></p>	<p>Where there is a change of circumstances for example change of venue of deteriorating weather conditions or in the light of experience</p>

**Note 1:** An example of a risk assessment record form is attached

**Note 2:** The risk assessment must be reviewed each time

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## Further Information

The following are available from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE):

HSG65: Successful Health and Safety Management

HSG165: Young People at Work: A Guide for Employers

HSG183: Five Steps to Risk Assessment: Case Studies

INDG163: Five Steps to Risk Assessment

INDG213: Five Steps to Information, Instruction and Training: Meeting Risk Assessment Requirements

INDG218: A Guide to Risk Assessment Requirements: Common Provisions in Health and Safety Law

INDG275: Managing Health and Safety: Five Steps to Success

L21: Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 — Approved Code of Practice

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA  
Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995.

HSE priced publications are also available from branches of the Stationery Office (formerly HMSO) and good booksellers.

The HSE have a specific web-page dedicated to risk assessment which is located at

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/>

The HSE home page is

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

and their enquiry service is available at HSE Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055.

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## Specimen Assessment of Risk – Example Awards Presentation

Hazard	Who might be harmed?	Is the risk adequately controlled	What further action is necessary to control the risk?
<p>Look for hazards that you could reasonably expect to result in significant harm. Use the following examples as a guide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity of venue, permitted numbers</li> <li>• Environment hazards including water courses, topography, falls from height etc</li> <li>• Vehicle access and car park safety, lighting</li> <li>• Slipping/tripping/falling hazards (e.g. poorly maintained floors or stairs, poor lighting)</li> <li>• Fire precautions including means of escape</li> <li>• Venue set up – use of contractors</li> <li>• Potential for activity at height (e.g. mezzanine floor use, show activities/effects)</li> <li>• Electricity capacity, protection, and use</li> <li>• Use of fireworks/smoke/lasers/lighting and other effects</li> <li>• Manual handling</li> <li>• Seating arrangements, stands, terraced seating, gangways</li> <li>• Alcohol/availability, opening times, service methods</li> <li>• Possibility of unauthorised access</li> </ul>	<p>There is no need to list individuals by name – just think about groups of people undertaking similar roles or who might be affected e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisers, coaches, instructors, stewards and volunteers</li> <li>• Participants</li> <li>• Attendees especially young persons and those with special needs</li> <li>• Venue staff/Maintenance personnel</li> <li>• Contractors</li> </ul> <p>Pay particular attention to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff with special needs</li> <li>• People with challenging behaviour</li> <li>• Visitors/Guests/Celebrities</li> <li>• Inexperienced or young volunteers and staff</li> </ul>	<p>Have you already taken precautions against the risks from the hazards you listed? For example, have you considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key hazards associated with venue to prevent accidents</li> <li>• Adequate experienced supervision</li> <li>• Clear briefing, information, instruction</li> <li>• Emergency plan properly communicated</li> <li>• Adequate systems or procedures</li> </ul> <p>Do the precautions :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet the standard set by a legal requirement?</li> <li>• Comply with a recognised industry standard?</li> <li>• Represent good practice?</li> <li>• Reduce risks as far as is reasonably practicable?</li> </ul> <p>If so then the risks are adequately controlled but you may need to indicate the precautions you have in place. You may refer to procedures, manuals, organisation rules etc.</p>	<p>What more could you reasonably do for those risks which you found were not adequately controlled?</p> <p>You will need to give priority to those risks which affect large numbers of people and/or could result in serious harm. Apply the principles below when taking further action, if possible in the following order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove the risk completely</li> <li>• Try a less risky option e.g. change venue</li> <li>• Prevent access to the hazard (e.g. by barriers)</li> <li>• Organise activities to reduce exposure to the hazard</li> <li>• Restrict alcohol, clarity of “out of bounds areas”</li> </ul>

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These and other Risk Management Guidelines addressing a wide variety of risk control issues are freely available from:

<http://www.managerisk.rsagroup.co.uk>

The information set out in this document constitutes a set of general guidelines and should not be construed or relied upon as specialist advice. Therefore RSA, Perkins Slade Ltd and the Sport and Recreation Alliance accepts no responsibility towards any person relying upon these Risk Management Guidelines nor accepts any liability whatsoever for the accuracy of data supplied by another party or the consequences of reliance upon it.

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