OPEN AIR EVENTS

For any outdoor event, festival, mass gathering etc to run safely, it is essential that there is suitable and sufficient pre-planning on behalf of all stakeholders involved. This should result in the production of an Event Management Plan.

As an event organiser, you must also conduct a fire safety risk assessment, as you are responsible for taking steps to protect people attending your event (premises) from the risk of fire. This includes employees, contractors, volunteers, the visiting public or any other person who has a legal right to be there.

Some of the areas you should consider in your risk assessment are (this list is not exhaustive and in no particular order):

- Housekeeping and waste management
- Catering facilities
- Special hazards posed by concessions, exhibitors or displays
- Storage
- Dangerous substances, storage, display and use
- Equipment and machinery, including generators
- Fuel and LPG handling and storage
- Electrical safety
- Smoking
- Managing construction assembly and alterations
- Restricting the spread of fire and smoke
- Arson
- Vehicles and vehicle movements
- Camping, including the use of barbecues or fire pits
- Firework Displays, Flying Lanterns or similar
- Additional risks faced by people with special needs

To assist you with this process, the National Fire Chiefs Council has developed a number of guidance documents and templates to enable a consistent approach to information giving, gathering, planning and record in (Event safety (nationalfirechiefs.org.uk)

These can be viewed and downloaded from and include an event organisers' checklist, advice for semi-permanent tented structures, and fire safety risk assessment templates for food concessions, traders and temporary structures.

These templates have been produced primarily for use by small and medium sized food concessions, traders and market stall holders to help them fulfil their obligations under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Provision of these templates does not preclude the use of other risk assessment tools in order to provide a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. In addition, they may not be suitable for larger scale structures or operations which may require a more detailed risk assessment to be undertaken.

The responsibility for producing a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment rests with the 'responsible person' as defined by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The information in this document is primarily intended for organisers, employers, managers and owners of premises providing open air events, such as: country fairs or similar events, carnivals, street festivals, fairgrounds, music concerts and festivals, balloon festivals, car boot sales, religious festivals, and other similar events.

It may also be useful to those responsible for theme parks, zoos, sporting events, race meetings, or other similar events or venues.

Sports stadia or regulated sports grounds, permanent buildings or structures, large temporary structures and air-supported structures are not covered by this guidance; if your event or venue includes the use of such premises, you should refer to the appropriate Government fire safety guides.

See also:

- Advice on fire detection and warning
- Advice on escape routes
- Advice on firefighting equipment
- Advice on lighting and signage
- Advice on event staff training
- Advice on servicing and maintenance of event equipment
- Health & Safety Executive – The Health & Safety Executive – Fire Safety
- Health, Safety and Welfare at Music and Other Events – The Purple Guide

Fire Appliance Access

Fire appliances should be able to access all parts of parts of the site and get within 50m of any structure. Fire appliance can weigh up to 18 tonnes and not all-wheel drive.

Minimum road width 3.7m / Gate width 3.1 (the road width is wider to allow fire appliances to open doors)

Size of exit widths from site, (not structures) (DCLG guide open air events page 68)

The number of emergency exits required to safely evacuate the site to be calculated.

Exits from the site need to have adequately sized signage and lighting if to be used after dark.

Gates and doors should open outwards in the direction of escape.

Gates identified as emergency exits should be unlocked and capable of being immediately openable without the use of a key.

Example calculation

109 People per meter of exit
***x** The time agreed to evac the site (10 minutes is low risk, 5 minutes medium)*
***x** Width of Exit in meters*
(eg 109 x 10 x 2.2m = 2398 people)
(discount 1 exit)

Emergency vehicle access routes to be identified

Where possible, a dedicated 'blue light' route should be provided for attending emergency responders. If you cannot provide dedicated emergency access routes, you must manage your escape routes to ensure people evacuating are not endangered by responding emergency vehicles.

Marquees (DCLG Guide open air events page 51)

Grass to be cut as short as possible before the erection of temporary structures and the grass cuttings cleared from the site.

The site structures should be arranged as to allow access by fire engines to within 50 meters of every part of the structure.

All Marquees and linings should be fire retardant, certification can be provided by a reputable supplier. Certification will be requested by the fire service on a site visit.

Marquees should have a safe distance between neighbouring marquees to prevent fire spread- recommend minimum 6m or risk assessment.

Exits should be signed in an enclosed structure.

Emergency lighting should be considered if the structure will be used after dark.

Occupancy figures should be worked out for enclosed structures.

Firefighting equipment should be provided in an appropriate location.

Some concession stands will provide their own pop-up Gazebos, Gazebos should be fire resistant or sides removed to prevent fire loading

Exits from temporary structures (DCLG Guide open air events Page 69 & 70)

You must ensure that sufficient escape routes are provided from structures.

Exits should be Easily, safely and immediately useable at all relevant times;

Adequate for the number of people likely to use them and allowing for increased capacity should any other routes or exits be rendered unusable by fire;

Clearly indicated.

Doors on final exits and all gates or doors leading to such exits should be unlocked and, where security devices are provided, they must be capable of being immediately and easily opened without the use of a key.

Gates and doors should open outwards in the direction of escape.

Sufficient lighting must be available to provide safe egress after dark.

Minimum width of any marquee or temporary structure exit should not be less than 1.05m (DCLG guide page 70)

A single exit within a structure is suitable for a maximum of 60 people occupancy.

More than 60 people there should be not less than two exits.

Exit widths, travel distances and occupancy figures need to be calculated.

Marquee or Tent **travel Distances** where only one exit is provided - 6.5m and 18m where more than one exit is provided. (DCLG guide page 70)

Example calculation

One single exit of 1.05m = 60 people
Two exits of 1.05m = 200 persons maximum
Two exits of 1.5m = 300 persons maximum
Two exits of 1.95m = 400 persons maximum

Where more than 60 people are accommodated, there should be not less than two exits, separated by a suitable distance and angle, which limits the possibility that both exits will be affected by fire mat the same time.

Emergency Announcements/alarms (Purple guide page 44)

You must have means of detecting a fire and warning people.

The means of giving warning of fire should be suitable for the particular event or venue, taking account of its size, layout, numbers of people likely to be present and the nature of the event.

For many open air events, the people present are the most practicable solution for fire detection and a shout of ‘fire’ may be all that is required. Where a shouted warning is insufficient, a manually-operated device such as a gong or air horn that can be heard by everyone may be appropriate.

At larger, more complex sites, a public address system is likely to be the most effective means of providing a warning and directing the evacuation. In larger structures, tents or marquees, a simple warning may not be sufficient. An electrical warning system may be required incorporating sounders and manually-operated break-glass call points.

In all cases, sufficient stewards or marshals should be trained and available to ensure the emergency action plan can be implemented swiftly on hearing the alarm.

- Consider PA system, load hailers, temporary alarm systems and back-up systems.

Lighting and Signage

You must consider if you have adequate lighting in the event of a fire.

The size and type of your event, venue or site layout and the risk to relevant persons will determine the complexity of emergency lighting required. In all cases, where the event or venue is used in the hours of darkness, it will be necessary to provide sufficient primary illumination for general safe movement and, in particular, to illuminate all escape routes and exits.

Whatever the primary source of power, a back-up power supply will also be necessary in case of primary power failure. Any back-up power supply should be capable of operation in the event of a failure to the primary power supply.

You must also make sure that adequate emergency escape signage is provided.

On simple sites, a few signs indicating the alternative exits might be all that is required. At more complex events or venues, a series of signs directing people along the escape routes towards the final exit may be needed.

If the event is to be in the hours of darkness, or where there may be poor light conditions, signs and notices will need to be illuminated to ensure they are conspicuous and legible.

You must consider the size of the signage provided at your event. (BS5499 page 12 & 13), eg for:-

Internally illuminated

200 x H (h is the height of the sign)

For externally illuminated

100 x H

Externally illuminated sign

175mm sign x 100 =17500mm or 17.5m viewing distance

Camping at Events (Purple Guide Chapter 18 page 113)

The Camping area will need to be reasonably well drained and level with grass cut short to minimise the spread of fire.

Break the camping areas up into discreate smaller areas to:

- Provide an identifiable area for campers
- Allow for the management of each area
- Control the densities of each area
- Create fire breaks and allow access routes for fire appliances.

fire appliances should be able to all parts of the site within 50m) fire appliances are not all wheel drive.

If possible separate individual tents to make the site safer from fire.

Separate live-in vehicles (campervans) from other types of camping.

Do not allow sleeping in cars in the car park.

Cars not to be allowed in tent area, cars to be parked away from sleeping area.

Concession owners sleeping with stock – sleeping should be separate and a safe distance away from stock or sales.

Caravans and motorhome should be kept a safe distance from each other – a figure often used is 6m

Consider the risk of open fires (Purple guide page 116)

- Extinguishers should be provided for stewards to use.

Power Generators (Purple guide page 72)

- Away from public areas
- Tested and inspected after installation
- Extinguishing media in close proximity
- Safe distance away from structures – recommend minimum of 2m or risk assessment)

Food concessions (Purple guide chapter 11 & 12)

- Gas cooking equipment and electrical equipment **should** have a compliance certificate.
- Spare gas cylinder **should** be stored away from cooking vehicle.
- Deep fat fryers **should** have thermal cut off
- Catering stalls should be grouped together in dedicated areas
- Catering facilities should have a **suitable** distance between neighbouring catering units.
- Catering faculties **should** have own risk assessment
- Catering facilities **should** have appropriate extinguishing media
- Sleeping with food concessions **should be away** from the catering operations (Purple guide page 77)– recommend 6m minimum or risk assessment.

Event Management plan

To be shared with the SAG as soon as possible or no later than 6 weeks prior to the event.

Site Visit

Will not always be necessary, however for larger, new or complex events one may be conducted 24 hours prior to the event and a visit may be also be carried out during the event.