

Annual inspections – process and form

Annex to the Guide to Safety Certification

# Introduction

This Annex is designed to assist local authorities in carrying out an inspection of a sports ground in accordance with the provisions of section 10B the [Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1975/52) (1975 Act). The statutory guidance is provided in [Home Office Circular 72/1987](https://sgsa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Home-Office-Circular-72-1987.pdf).

This annex supports the content in the Guide to Safety Certification. It seeks to present key information in a single document and support the statutory guidance in line with the modern approach to testing and embrace the latest developments in safety management. However, local authorities must ensure that they are fully aware of the contents of the statutory guidance given in Home Office Circular 72/1987 before carrying out any annual inspection.

It should be noted that, owing to the wide variation of conditions and facilities to be found at sports grounds, this annex does not seek to cover all elements likely to be considered when carrying out the Annual Inspection. This is because the assessment should be specific to each individual ground taking full account of each different design and circumstances of a ground.

# What is the annual inspection?

The annual inspection is a statutory requirement placed on the local authority to carry out an inspection of the sports ground on a non-match day to inspect the physical condition of the ground and equipment along with any records maintained by ground management.

Section 10B of the 1975 Act provides that:

*“It shall be the duty of every local authority to enforce within their area the provisions of this Act and of regulations made under it and for that purpose to arrange for the periodical inspection of designated sports grounds ……….”*

That section goes on to explain that “periodical” means at least once in every 12 months and requires local authorities undertaking those inspections to act in accordance with such guidance as the Secretary of State may give them, as provided in Home Office Circular 72/1987.

Due to the periodic inspection being carried out at least every 12 months it became more commonly known as an “Annual Inspection”.

For designated grounds and regulated stands with accommodation for over 2,000 spectators, the Home Office Circular states there should be one inspection every calendar year. For regulated stand or stands with a spectator capacity of under 2000 the minimum is once every two calendar years.

In addition to this statutory annual inspection local authorities should also undertake inspections of the ground while it is in use both to monitor compliance with the safety certificate and to observe the safety management operation. Such inspections are referred to as “During Performance Inspections” and their frequency should be determined on a risk assessed basis.

The local authority annual inspection should not be confused with the detailed, annual inspection of all structures carried out by the clubs' structural engineer.

# Who should be involved in carrying out the annual inspection?

Home Office Circular 72/1987 advises that:

*“The Local Authority should be satisfied that inspections under this guidance are carried out by a person or persons qualified for that purpose.”*

The guidance leaves it for the local authority to determine how best to undertake inspections, but it must be satisfied that the inspecting officers are competent for that purpose although there is no legal requirement for inspections to be undertaken by staff from a particular professional discipline.

Many local authorities consider the advantages of a team approach to the Annual Inspection. This might involve the officers who represent the police, fire, ambulance and building authorities on the SAG.

These visits can be carried out jointly as a team or on separate occasions for each officer to look at their own discipline and feed back to SAG chair.

# Method of carrying out and recording the annual inspection

The annual inspection should be carried out when the local authority and safety management team can devote time to the process, as it will involve the production and review of plans, records, documentation, and test certificates as well as visiting and inspecting the ground in person.

This is often carried out in the closed season for sports grounds although with increases in ground sharing arrangements with other sports, concerts and other events taking place, more careful planning may be required.

With this in mind, it is advisable that the local authority provide sufficient notice of the inspection to the safety management team, to ensure they have the time to plan for the visit. It is also advisable for the local authority to provide a list of documentation that will be required to be inspected during the visit to ensure the safety management team have the appropriate documentation ready to review.

As part of its audit trail the local authority should maintain detailed records of all Annual Inspections. The Home Office Circular 72/1987 advises that:

*“Local authorities will doubtless need to keep a record of all inspections carried out under the Statutory Guidance and may wish to consider whether a copy of any report/record should be sent to the holder of the safety certificate. Local authorities are also asked to consider affording a reasonable opportunity for any such report to be made available for inspection, if so requested, by members of the public.”*

The record of the annual inspection can be in various styles such as a report or completed pro-forma. An example report that could be used to record an Annual Inspection is attached at Appendix A.

It is recommended that any problems or issues highlighted during the annual inspection are photographed for ease of reference and to assist with discussions at a later date. These photos should be incorporated into the report form, section A7 at the end of Appendix A has been included to assist with this.

The local authority should have procedures in place that set out their monitoring function and how the annual inspection is to be carried out. This should also identify who should receive copies of the completed inspection reports. Further information on producing monitoring procedures can be found in Section 6 of the Guide to Safety Certification.

The report should also be used for monitoring that follow up action is taken where the inspection has identified either the need for remedial action by ground management or a contravention of the safety certificate.

It is also advised that the annual inspection is discussed at the next Safety Advisory Group meeting to ensure all relevant parties are aware of any issues identified and any action to be taken. This can then be recorded in the Safety Advisory Group minutes to ensure an audit trail is maintained.

# What should be included in the annual inspection?

Home Office Circular 72/1987 prescribes in considerable detail what is to be examined by or on behalf of the local authority during an annual inspection. These items are included within the template form in Appendix A.

The Home Office Circular 72/1987 does specify some checks in a percentage format such as checking 10% of the terraces or viewing slopes for general surface condition, even-ness and slip resistance. This percentage format is not in line with the modern method of checks and testing which instead should be carried out on a risk-based approach. We would therefore recommend that when carrying out the Annual Inspection checks these are carried out considering things such as age, location, previous tests and other associated risks, but should always represent at least a minimum of 10% as per the Home Office Circular.

Since the Home Office Circular was written there has been a move to grounds producing an Operations Manual that should contain all the documents considered necessary for the safe management of the event, such as policy and planning documents, risk assessments, contingency plans, operational plans and site plans. A check should be made that the latest version of the Operations Manual contains all the necessary documents required to run an event safely. For details of key documentation to be included in the Operations Manual see Green Guide section 3.4, this consideration has been included in Appendix A.

In addition to the Operations Manual the local authority should check the ground have documented clear and concise capacity calculations as well as (P) and (S) Factor assessments that have been produced by a competent person. These must be reviewed annually or whenever there are significant changes at the ground.

Steward training, requirements and qualifications have also changed since the Home Office Circular was published with safety certificates containing specific requirements of both in-house and agency stewards, this consideration has also been included in Appendix A.

An important part of the annual inspection is to check the physical integrity of a sports ground. To help assess this, the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds recommends the ground carry out the following structural inspections:

* A detailed, annual inspection of all structures, installations and components (Section 5.12 of the Green Guide).
* A detailed structural appraisal carried out at regular intervals (every six to ten years) (Section 5.13 of the Green Guide).

As there is often confusion between what constitutes an annual inspection and what is involved in a structural appraisal the text below sets out the key differences.

In essence, an annual inspection is a more straight forward visual, non-intrusive inspection of all structures, installations and components in the ground. Whereas a structural appraisal is a more detailed and often intrusive inspection which may include comprehensive review and testing of structural elements. The six-to-ten-year interval of the structural appraisal should not be a ground management consideration but is a decision which can only be made by the clubs' structural engineer.

# Appendix A – Template Annual Inspection Form

Note that this list is not intended to be exhaustive and will vary from ground to ground, but seeks to illustrate the range of items to be inspected and checked during the annual inspection process.

|  |  |
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| **General information** | |
| **Name and address of sports ground** |  |
| **Issue date of last Safety Certificate** |  |
| **Date annual inspection carried out** |  |
| **Report compiled by** |  |

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| **Inspection team** | | |
| **Name** | **Organisation** | **Designation** |
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| **A1. Life safety systems**  Have the following **certificates of testing** as required under the conditions of the safety certificate been carried out and inspected? | | |
| **Item tested** | **Date of certificate** | **Comments/actions** |
| 1. Electrical tests |  |  |
| 1. Public address system |  |  |
| 1. CCTV |  |  |
| 1. Emergency telephones |  |  |
| 1. Automatic fire detection and alarm systems |  |  |
| 1. Active fire protection systems   (e.g. sprinklers / suppression systems, smoke extraction / ventilation systems, emergency voice communication systems/ refuges, fire extinguishers etc) |  |  |
| 1. Passive fire protection systems   (e.g. fire curtains / shutters, fire doors, fire & smoke dampers etc) |  |  |
| 1. Emergency lighting |  |  |
| 1. Turnstile monitoring |  |  |
| 1. Annual inspection of all structures carried out by a structural engineer   (stands, floodlights, gantries, platforms) |  |  |
| 1. Detailed structural appraisal carried out at regular intervals (every six to ten years) |  |  |
| 1. Barrier integrity (Strength/ Loading tests carried out on crush barriers, guard rails, handrails, walls etc) |  |  |
| 1. Lightning protection |  |  |
| 1. Auxiliary power (generator testing) |  |  |
| 1. Lift inspection / certification   (e.g. refighting lift, evacuation lift, standard passenger lift etc) |  |  |
| 1. Gas safety certification |  |  |
| 1. Any other required certificates |  |  |

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| **A2. Records maintained**  Are the **following records** as required under the conditions of the safety certificate being kept and inspected? | | | |
| **Records** | **Records maintained (Yes / No)** | **Comments/actions** |
| 1. Spectator attendance |  |  |
| 1. Accidents and incidents |  |  |
| 1. Maintenance and other inspection of buildings, components, and installations, together with deficiencies and remedial work |  |  |
| 1. Testing of emergency lighting |  |  |
| 1. Testing of public address system |  |  |
| 1. Testing of automatic fire detection and alarm systems |  |  |
| 1. Testing of active fire protection systems |  |  |
| 1. Testing of passive fire protection systems |  |  |
| 1. Testing of emergency evacuation procedures |  |  |
| 1. Any other required records |  |  |

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| **A3. Inspection of ground**  Has the local authority inspection of the ground included the following areas? | | |
| **Indicative question** | **Inspected**  **Yes / No** | **Comments/actions** |
| 1. Are there any parts of the ground where an accident or incident resulting in a serious injury to a spectator has occurred since the last inspection? |  |  |
| 1. Are there any recorded defects or deficiencies which have arisen since the last inspection which could lead to an accident resulting in a serious injury? |  |  |
| 1. Have there been any major remedial works carried out since the last inspection and if so, have you ascertained that these works have been carried out satisfactorily? |  |  |
| 1. Check all public stairways for general condition, slip resistance, condition of handrails, trip hazards, lighting adequacy and structural fire separation? |  |  |
| 1. Check all public egress routes including emergency exits for obstructions, litter, operation of exit gates, adequacy of sign posting and lighting? |  |  |
| 1. Check automatic fire detection and alarm systems? |  |  |
| 1. Check of active fire protection systems? |  |  |
| 1. Check of passive fire protection systems? |  |  |
| 1. Is there any accumulation of litter within the ground? |  |  |
| 1. Check emergency lighting system including generator or batteries? |  |  |
| 1. Check all first aid facilities and equipment? |  |  |
| 1. Check on a risk-based approach crush barriers, balustrade and hand rails for overt signs of weakness which might signal the need for further action?\* |  |  |
| 1. Check on a risk-based approach any terraces or viewing slopes for general surface condition, evenness and slip resistance?\* |  |  |
| 1. Check on a risk-based approach anchorage and fastening of any fixed seating?\* |  |  |
| \* If the above three questions give rise to serious concern of spectator safety the local authority should inspect all of the relevant parts of the ground where the deficiencies were found. | | |
| 1. Check any accessibility provision for the disabled? |  |  |
| 1. Check fire stopping is intact and any records relating to products and location (include any alterations that may have removed/damaged existing fire stopping)? |  |  |
| 1. Check escape signage is correct type, size and location? |  |  |

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| **A4. Testing by the local authority**  The testing of the following should if possible be carried out by the person carrying out the annual inspection to confirm that the following are in working order. | | |
| **Indicative question** | **Testing carried out**  **(Yes / No)** | **Comments/actions** |
| 1. Is lighting, particularly stairways and exit routes in working order? |  |  |
| 1. Is emergency lighting in working order? |  |  |
| 1. Is the public address system, including the function of zoning in working order? |  |  |
| 1. Is the automatic fire detection and alarm systems in working order? |  |  |
| 1. Are the turnstiles/metering system for recording the admission of spectators to parts of the ground in working order? |  |  |

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| **A5. Stewarding**  Has the annual inspection included consideration of the following areas regarding stewarding? | | |
| **Steward questions to consider** | **Question considered**  **Yes / No** | **Comments/actions** |
| 1. Is there a *Stewarding Plan* in place including a risk assessment to determine the number, location and duties of all safety staff? |  |  |
| 1. Does the management have training records for each steward? |  |  |
| 1. Are stewards trained, assessed, and have either achieved a Level 2 spectator safety qualification within the National Qualifications Framework or undergoing such training? |  |  |
| 1. Are directly employed in-house stewards that undertake licensable activities as defined in the Private Security Industry Act 2001, subject to initial and ongoing vetting every three years comprising of an identity check and Standard Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check? |  |  |
| 1. Where agency stewards are used, does the management have evidence of their training, assessment and qualifications prior to their deployment at an event? |  |  |
| 1. Do agency stewards undertaking licensable activities at the ground each hold a valid and appropriate Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence? |  |  |

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| **A6. Safety procedures and systems**  Are the following safety procedures and systems in place? | | |
| **Safety procedures and systems** | **In place?**  **Yes / No** | **Comments/actions** |
| 1. Does the management have an Event Safety Policy in place which is reviewed on an annual basis? |  |  |
| 1. Is there a defined management structure for supervising event day arrangements? |  |  |
| 1. Are members of the Board of Directors/ Committee and/or senior management actively engaged in the safety management of the ground? |  |  |
| 1. Have contingency plans been prepared by the club for dealing with both major and minor incidents? Are these reviewed annually, and have they been agreed with the local authority and emergency services? |  |  |
| 1. When and how were contingency plans last tested, and were the lessons learnt acted upon? |  |  |
| 1. Is there an up-to-date Fire Safety Plan and Fire Risk Assessment? |  |  |
| 1. Are there documented capacity calculations and (P) and (S) Factors assessments in place that are reviewed annually? |  |  |
| 1. Is the management’s Operations Manual up to date and in order? (For details of key documentation to be included in the Operations Manual see Green Guide section 3.4) |  |  |
| 1. Has management considered measures that it can take to ensure reasonable safety at the ground when affected by external factors? This should be in the form of a Zone Ex Co-ordination Plan. |  |  |
| 1. Are all records of pre-match and post-match safety checks complete, up-to-date and readily accessible? |  |  |
| 1. Is the location, nature and cause of all incidents or near misses that may affect the safety of those at the ground recorded, and are these, together with any complaints, subsequently followed up? |  |  |

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| **A7. Photos from inspection of ground**  The following photos show problems highlighted during the inspection along with a comment about the issues. | |
| Photo 1 | Comment/issue |
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| Photo 2 | Comment/issue |
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| Photo 3 | Comment/issue |
|  |  |
| Photo 4 | Comment/issue |
|  |  |
| Photo 5 | Comment/issue |
|  |  |
| Photo 6 | Comment/issue |
|  |  |
| Photo 7 | Comment/issue |
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