

Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds

Supplementary Guidance 03: Event Safety Management

Annex B: Exercise planning



B1.0 Basic principles

SG03 B1.1 Introduction

As stated in Section 3.21 of the *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Green Guide)*, it is not sufficient merely to draw up contingency plans or to have emergency plans in place. Staff must also be trained to understand and perform their roles under those plans, and, once trained, to participate in exercises. Such training and exercising may also be a requirement of a safety certificate.

Exercises for contingency and emergency plans have three main purposes:

- a. to validate the plans
- b. to develop staff competencies and awareness, and give them practice in carrying out their roles under those plans
- c. to test well-established procedures.

Section SG03 7.17 of the *Supplementary Guidance 03: Event Safety Management* further stresses the importance of planning a programme of such tests and exercises over an agreed schedule. This is to ensure that at least one contingency and/or emergency plan is tested per year, and preferably all contingency plans tested over a three or four year cycle. Indeed, exercises should not be viewed as one-off events but part of an ongoing cycle of planning, exercising/implementing, analysing, and reviewing the plans. This is known as the planning cycle, as outlined in Figure SG03 1 of *Event Safety Management*.

This Annex explains the planning process, outlines the different forms an exercise can take, and summarises the practical steps required for an exercise to be effective.

It is emphasised that the guidance in this Annex is not exhaustive. Venue management and/or event organisers should always consider carefully the needs and characteristics of their own venue and/or event, before implementing the recommendations that follow.

The *Supplementary Guidance 03: Event Safety Management*, *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Green Guide)*, and this Annex are compiled and published by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, 10 South Colonnade, London, E14 4PU.

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SG03 B1.2 Types of exercise

An exercise is a simulation of one or more critical incidents or emergency situations.

The three main types of exercise (as outlined on the [Gov.uk website](#)) are:

- a. discussion-based
- b. tabletop
- c. live.

A fourth option is an exercise which combines any of the above three types.

SG03 B1.3 Discussion-based exercises

Discussion-based exercises (also known as seminar, orientation or workshop exercises) are the most basic form of exercise.

Led by one Exercise Director, assisted by one or more facilitators, they involve simply talking through the plan in question with a group or groups of individuals in a classroom environment and asking participants to discuss how they would respond to various scenarios.

Such exercises are a good way to raise awareness and familiarise staff with existing plans. They can also be useful for introducing a new plan, or as part of the induction for new staff.

A discussion-based exercise:

- a. can form part of a training programme
- b. is relatively simple to organise
- c. can produce helpful learning points for the organisation.

However, a discussion-based exercise is unlikely to result in a detailed or thorough analysis of a plan's effectiveness, or in the identification of gaps or weaknesses.

SG03 B1.4 Tabletop exercises

Tabletop exercises are also designed to be led by an Exercise Director, assisted by one or more facilitators in a classroom environment, but they require more detailed planning and more advanced forms of exercise simulation.

Typically they begin with a prepared narrative, based upon a realistic situation, sets the scene.

At various points during the exercise participants are provided with further information to which they are expected to respond, as required by the existing contingency and emergency plans and in line with their own specific roles.

During the course of the exercise the scenario may be developed in stages, each becoming more challenging and complex, with updates being provided at pre-arranged times (see [Section SG03 B2.3.g](#)). Additional information or 'injects' may also be passed on to specific participants or groups of participants, thereby simulating the way in which situational awareness develops during a real incident.



Tabletop exercises can be conducted in real time, or in simulated time shifts which represent periods of several hours, days or even weeks.

A tabletop exercise should be designed to provide a robust test of a plan, using relatively few resources. But in every case and for every session, detailed planning and careful facilitation is essential.

SG03 B1.5 Live exercises

A live exercise is the most complex type of exercise, requiring the actual simulation of an incident – the nature of which can vary in scale and severity – in the actual venue or location. Such an exercise may also be conducted during a live event.

This type of exercise could be designed to test just one element of a plan, such as the response of stewards to a fire, or a bomb threat. Or it could involve the simulation of a major disaster that requires the complete evacuation of a venue (see [Section SG03 B2.6](#)).

As such, live exercises will typically involve the movement of people (whether they are volunteers posing as spectators, or actual spectators), and of equipment.

Clearly therefore, live exercises carry their own risks, all of which will need to be assessed in advance before the exercise can be approved.

Live exercises also typically require the deployment of the venue or event organiser's safety personnel, the use of the venue's command and control facilities, and the active co-ordination of all participants, including, where applicable, the emergency services, medical providers, Zone Ex stakeholders and members of the public.

Major live exercises might additionally include the set up, and operation of an emergency control centre, and the simulation of full incident management by the venue's safety management team during the period before the arrival of the emergency services and/or, where applicable, their assumption of responsibility.

Live exercises, it is stressed, should not be considered as an alternative to discussion-based or tabletop exercises, or vice versa. Instead, each type should complement the others, and be designed to test different aspects of the response.

SG03 B1.6 Personnel – roles and responsibilities

Exercises should be led only by competent persons, who may or may not be directly employed by the venue management or event organiser (see [Section SG03 B2.1](#)).

The number of key personnel to be involved will vary according to the type and scale of the exercise. For example a simple discussion-based exercise might be run by two people, whereas a major live exercise will require a large team.

Typically however the following roles should be considered:

- a.** An Exercise Director, responsible for the overall running of the exercise but able also to intervene in exercise play, if necessary.



- b. One or more ‘facilitators’ to assist in running the exercise; for example by facilitating each group in a discussion-based or tabletop exercise, and by making sure that participants address the questions or decisions posed during the scenario.
- c. One or more individuals, sometimes called ‘umpires’, to watch and listen, to monitor whether the activities are unfolding as planned, and to record information for later analysis.
- d. Loggists, to provide a written record of events.

SG03 B1.7 Ongoing planning for tests and exercises

As noted earlier, Section SG03 7.17 of *Event Safety Management* stresses the importance of planning a schedule of tests and exercises over an agreed schedule. This is to ensure that at least one contingency and/or emergency plan is tested per year, and preferably all plans tested over a three or four year cycle.

To achieve this, the long-term schedule should include a variety of types of exercises, relating to a variety of plans, over an specified period, as illustrated in Table SG03 B1 below.

For example, if a contingency plan which involves the evacuation of a venue or a section of a venue is tested by a discussion-based exercise in Year 1, it is recommended that the same plan is tested by either a tabletop or a live exercise in Years 2 or 3.

Note also that part of the schedule should include exercising the planned responses of the Crisis Management Team, as explained in Sections SG03 3.4 and 7.3 of *Event Safety Management*.

Table SG03 B1

Plan	Exercises /activations Year 1	Exercises /activations Year 2	Exercises due Year 3
Crisis Management Team plan	Exercise [DATE] and [TYPE] Link to debrief report		
Contingency plan A		Exercise [DATE] and [TYPE] Link to report	
Contingency plan B	Incident [DATE] Link to debrief report		
Contingency plan C		Incident DATE Link to debrief report	
Contingency plan D			Exercise due



B2.0 Planning an exercise

SG03 B2.1 Personnel and planning

With the exception of only the simplest of discussion-based exercises, the staging of most exercises will require a significant amount of thought and preparation by a group of key individuals, all of whom should be involved from the earliest stages of planning and be competent to fulfil the roles allocated to them.

Another option is to bring in an external consultant or consultants to deliver the exercise in its entirety and/or to act as facilitators during the exercise.

The involvement of external personnel offers a number of advantages, such as bringing a fresh perspective to the safety management team, and the ability to ask participants difficult questions.

In addition, some service providers are able to use IT systems to run realistic simulations of incidents, and to test responses using incident management software.

If using external consultants, it is important to ensure that they are fully briefed and have a good understanding of the venue and how it works, and of the event and its likely characteristics. It is also important that the venue management and/or event organiser maintain regular contact with the consultants throughout the planning process, to ensure that the proposed exercise meets their requirements.

Where more than one organisation is involved in the planning process, it is further recommended that the exercise be given a name or code word.

SG03 B2.2 Exercise brief

The first stage of planning is to produce an initial brief, which outlines the scope of the exercise, the resources required and the methodology to be used. This brief should be taken to senior management for approval and to ensure that, as part of the safety culture in place within the organisation, there is support for the exercise from the highest levels.

To assist in the drawing up of a brief, [Table SG03 B2](#) overpage summarises the main elements to be considered.



Table SG03 B2

Aim	What are you hoping to achieve? This should be one sentence, for example: 'To validate the contingency plan for evacuation of the venue'.
Objectives	What specific elements or outcomes would you like to complete or examine during the exercise? This should be a small list, for example: 'To evaluate the effectiveness of training for stewards on evacuation plans'.
Resources	What level of resources will be needed in terms of budget, staffing, facilities and equipment?
Status of the plan(s) to be tested	Is the plan already established, or recently reviewed, or new?
Type of exercise	Will the exercise be discussion-based, tabletop, live or a combination? The decision should be based upon: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the information identified under the previous four headings• the type of exercising, if any, that the plan has undergone in previous years.
Exercise scope	Is this an internal exercise or will it involve external stakeholders such as the emergency services and medical providers? Will it cover the initial response to an incident, until the arrival of emergency services, or will it extend through to the debrief and recovery stage?
Participants	How many people will be involved? How experienced are they? Which organisations and at what level? Will observers be permitted to attend?
Location and facilities available	Are the location and the facilities available suitable and adequate for the type of exercise and the number of people involved?
Exercise delivery team	How many people will be required? For a simple discussion-based exercise: one to direct and facilitate and one to record and assess the outcomes. For a tabletop exercise: one to direct, one to umpire (?): that is, to monitor, record and assess the outcomes and one facilitator per group For a live exercise, depending on the scale, a team consisting of: one to direct, one to monitor, record and assess the outcomes at each scene/ location, an adequate number of logistics personnel and the Safety Officer.
Scenario	What will be the scenario or scenarios covered in the exercise? How realistic will any simulations be?
Method of delivery	Will the exercise be held in person or online? Will it be paper-based and/or make use of technological aids? Will it be recorded?



SG03 B2.3 Detailed planning

Having drawn up the brief and secured senior management approval for the exercise, detailed planning should now commence on the following elements:

a. Participant list

An early decision should be made as to which key individuals need to be involved in the exercise; that is from senior management, senior safety personnel, supervisory stewards, external consultants, stakeholders and so on.

If the intention is to involve casual staff, such as stewards or car park attendants, the planners should also consider their availability and, where applicable, their remuneration.

All participants should have an awareness of their role in the plan to be tested, and ideally have undergone some form of training, before being involved in an exercise.

b. Date and time

This should be set as far in advance as possible in order to ensure that all key participants are able to attend.

c. Lead roles

Advanced planning should identify which lead roles, as set out in [Section SG03 B1.6](#), need to be filled, and who will fill them. In each case the individual should be competent to fill the role allocated to them and should be provided with clear guidance as to what the role involves.

d. Facilities and equipment

Before the staging of any exercise, all facilities should be checked, including for security purposes (so that any sensitive information is not leaked or shared with third parties).

Similarly, all necessary equipment such as seating, audio visual aids, barriers, signs, medical supplies, torches and so on, should be checked in advance.

e. Safety

Risk assessments for the exercise should be carried out by competent persons, and, if necessary, control measures implemented to ensure the safety of participants, directing staff and, where applicable, members of the public.

Live exercises in particular can pose safety risks which must be carefully considered.

These risks should not outweigh the potential benefit of conducting the exercise.

It is also recommended that a code word should be agreed, to halt or terminate the exercise in the event of a real incident or safety concern arising. This code word should be included in pre-exercise briefings, along with any other relevant safety information.



f. Insurance

The venue management or event organiser responsible for staging the exercise should check that the activity proposed is covered by existing insurance policies and, if not, arrange special cover.

Insurance is a particularly important factor for live exercises that involve spectators and/or are to be held in areas accessible to the public.

g. Scenario

Each scenario must be planned in detail and implemented as planned, to ensure that the exercise achieves its objectives within the allocated time.

The scenario should never be allowed to evolve undirected.

Depending on the complexity of the exercise, the scenario may need to include:

- i. A timeline, setting out each step of the developing situation. This should make clear whether the exercise will run in real time, or whether time shifts will be incorporated.
- ii. A detailed script, outlining the key situation updates, and including all messages and pieces of information to be given out at each stage.
- iii. Specific messages or injects, to be given to certain individuals or groups at defined points during the exercise.
- iv. Details of how injects will be given to participants, whether by telephone, messaging app, paper feed, radio, and so on.

It is important that the scenario proposed should be credible, not only to ensure that the exercise is relevant and worthwhile, but also to prevent participants from being distracted by discussions as to whether or not such a scenario could really happen.

That said, scenarios which simulate low probability, high impact events – such as a terrorist attack or building collapse – or which involve a complex chain of events, should still be considered, but must be carefully scripted.

Above all, attention to detail is key, along with the provision of good quality support materials and simulated media – such as plans, photographs and video clips – all of which can help participants to engage meaningfully with the scenario.

h. Communications

All participants should receive in advance clear information about the event and what will be expected of them. Such information should include:

- i. How the directing team will communicate with participants and other staff during the exercise; for example, via the public address system, radios, telephones, messaging systems, and so on.
- ii. Any agreed signals or code words to be used for starting, halting or terminating the exercise.



i. Volunteers and members of the public

Some live exercises may require the use of volunteers to act as spectators or as members of the public.

Careful consideration should therefore be given as to how volunteers will be recruited, briefed, deployed and debriefed afterwards. Also importantly, how can their safety and wellbeing be ensured throughout?

If the exercise is take place at a live event or in a public place, it is further vital to ensure the safety of members of the public who may be attending the event, or who may happen to be in the vicinity when the exercise is being conducted.

It may be appropriate, for example, to pre-warn them that an exercise is scheduled to take place, and/or to provide signage around the vicinity, to prevent any undue confusion or alarm.

j. Media

If the exercise is likely to attract public attention, it is recommended that pre-prepared information is communicated to the appropriate media outlets and social media channels.

This should help to avoid members of the public being distracted, or themselves providing a distraction during the exercise.

It should also help to demonstrate that the venue management or event organiser is taking its responsibilities seriously, thereby allaying possible anxieties and forestalling any inaccurate reporting.

k. Monitoring, controlling and gathering information

To be relevant and worthwhile, it is vital that all stages of the exercise are monitored and recorded, and that any data on the outcomes is properly analysed.

This will require that detailed and accurate records are kept of all decisions and of all actions taken by individuals, groups or organisations participating in the exercise.

How those records are made, and kept, will depend on the type and scale of the exercise, but typically they will include the use of:

- i. observers, umpires and/or loggists
- ii. incident management systems which provide records of interactions
- iii. video conferencing applications
- iv. CCTV
- v. written records from participants.



SG03 B2.4 Briefing

Briefing is critical to the success of any exercise. Its purpose is to ensure that everyone taking part knows what is expected of them and how the exercise will be conducted.

A discussion exercise may simply require a short address to the whole group, to include an explanation of the exercise's aims and objectives, and how it is to be facilitated.

A complex live exercise, on the other hand, may require separate briefings to be scripted and developed for different groups and individuals, to be delivered at different times and in different places, by a team of exercise directing staff.

These briefings should set the scene in a realistic manner. It may help if part of it is presented as a simulated briefing relating to the particular incident.

Note that the personnel running the exercise – that is the facilitators, umpires and other key staff members – should themselves be briefed separately, in advance, to ensure that they understand their own roles and tasks. However, they should also attend the main briefing, so that they may understand more fully what is expected of the other participants.

The main briefing should include:

- a. the aims and objectives of the exercise
- b. any relevant housekeeping or practical information
- c. details of how the exercise will be run and how information will be communicated
- d. what is expected of the participants
- e. an introduction to the scenario proposed, together with any relevant scene setting information
- f. safety information for all participants (see [Section SG03 B2.3.e](#) above).

SG03 B2.5 Exercise play

It is the responsibility of the Exercise Director to:

- a. steer the exercise and ensure that it keeps within its original design and timescale
- b. be aware of the health and safety implications of any actions and ensure that neither the participants nor the public are put into hazardous situations
- c. monitor and relate all decisions and actions taken during the exercise against the venue management and/or event organiser's existing policies, contingency or emergency plans.



During the exercise the directing team should set the pace by introducing or holding back any pre-arranged injects or messages.

Furthermore, whilst there may be occasions when the emergence of a non-scripted situation could prove beneficial for the participants, such occurrences should only arise as the result of a conscious decision by the Exercise Director.

Otherwise, no member of the directing team should introduce new material or new scenarios that were not part of the original design.

SG03 B2.6 Issues relating to evacuation exercises

Every venue or event should have in place contingency and emergency plans that include the partial or full evacuation of spectators and staff. These plans should be tested and validated by exercises.

Venue management and safety personnel need to understand how spectators and non-safety staff are likely to behave in given situations, and how they should respond.

Clearly, a live exercise involving real spectators presents particular challenges. Accordingly, such an exercise should be considered only after the conducting of a full risk assessment.

When conducting this assessment, it should be recognised that whilst fire drills and evacuation exercises are relatively easy to conduct in workplaces – where the majority of those on the premises are familiar with the location – the same drills and exercises are considerably more challenging at venues. This is because staff are greatly outnumbered by spectators, and many of those spectators may not be familiar with the venue, and/or may instinctively seek to exit along the same route by which they entered.

When planning and designing an exercise to test evacuation plans, therefore, the venue management and/or event organiser must consider the advantages and disadvantages of involving actual spectators during an event.

In making this decision, it is important to strike a balance between creating an exercise that is so realistic that spectators (including disabled spectators) are put at risk, and one where there is no sense of urgency and which may therefore give a false impression.

Among the factors to consider are:

- a.** the elements of the plan that is to be exercised
- b.** the size and configuration of the venue
- c.** the type of hazards and the potential levels of risk in the areas concerned
- d.** whether previous exercises have already satisfactorily identified the pattern of crowd movements
- e.** the likely level of disruption that the exercise may cause outside the venue and/or in Zone Ex, and whether this will create issues that require management by the police.



These considerations will in turn help the venue management and/or event organiser to determine which of the following scenarios is the most appropriate for the proposed exercise:

- f.** a full evacuation of the venue coinciding with the conclusion of the event, possibly including directing spectators away from their normal exit routes
- g.** the real or simulated attendance of emergency service vehicles, to confirm whether access routes are clear, rendezvous points are available and attendance times are realistic
- h.** the evacuation of one or more stands or spectator areas to a place of safety, usually at the conclusion of the event
- i.** on a non-event day, an exercise that requires an invited audience to play the part of spectators
- j.** on an event day when relatively few spectators are expected, a full or partial evacuation of the venue
- k.** on an event day, an exercise involving the safety personnel, other agencies and the emergency services, but not the movement of spectators
- l.** a simulated failure of one or more of the safety systems, such as the main power supply, radio network, CCTV, or public address system, which would normally form part of the evacuation plan
- m.** a tabletop exercise involving all staff and the emergency services.

SG03 B2.7 Spectator involvement

Experience has shown that it can be beneficial to involve spectators, particularly those who attend regularly, in an evacuation exercise. Any increase in their understanding of evacuation procedures and routes should make the task of the venue management or event organiser easier in the event of a real emergency.

Where spectators are to be involved in an evacuation exercise, the venue management should ensure that they are well informed in advance of what is to happen and what will be expected of them.

This can be achieved using one or more of the following means:

- a.** information on the venue or event's website and social media feeds
- b.** the venue's public address system and/or display screens
- c.** a written entry in the event programme, where applicable
- d.** notices at the venue
- e.** the distribution of leaflets to spectators on their arrival.



B3.0 Post-exercise

SG03 B3.1 Debriefing

The extent and form of the debriefing and subsequent analysis will clearly depend upon the nature and scale of the exercise itself. A simple post-exercise review may suffice for a discussion or small tabletop exercise. However, the largest exercises will require a more detailed and sophisticated analysis, both collectively and by each individual agency.

It is good practice to conduct an initial debrief before any of the participants leave, to ensure that they are safe, and to capture immediate feedback. Where appropriate, this should be supplemented by more detailed debriefing, and the completion of evaluation forms, at a later date.

Further information on debriefing is available in Section SG03 9.9 of *Event Safety Management*.

SG03 B3.2 Post-exercise evaluation and assessment

A careful evaluation of the outcomes from the exercise is essential if lessons are to be learnt, and necessary changes made to policies, plans and procedures.

In all aspects of this evaluation, there should be a clear focus on the aims and objectives of the exercise.

- Were they achieved, and in the way which was expected? If not, why not?
- Was the plan followed, as scripted?
- What lessons can be learnt from the way the exercise unfolded, and the reactions of the participants to the situation?

All participants, and those involved in running the exercise – including the exercise directing team, observers, umpires and loggists – should be given the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation, through participation in debriefs and by completing written evaluation forms.

These responses should be analysed, along with any other data collected during the event, and compiled into a post-exercise report.

The post exercise report should:

- a. provide an overview of the exercise itself (who took part, the format and so on)
- b. identify any gaps in the plan
- c. highlight issues which occurred in relation to the implementation of the contingency plans
- d. identify learning points which will enable the venue management to make improvements.

The post-exercise report should be received by senior management, and used to inform the development of an action plan that seeks to ensure that lessons are acted upon and outcomes monitored.

Moreover, the findings of the report should lead on to the development of more robust contingency plans, and enable the planning cycle to continue.