

Athletics

Area: Dry Activities **Category:** Facility and Operations

Introduction

Athletics is a group of sporting events that involves competitive running, jumping, throwing, and walking. These guidance notes aim to provide some key points and information to assist operators in awareness and implementing best practice associated with athletics equipment and volunteers.

How to use the guidance notes

Operators have a legal requirement to manage health and safety. Employers must protect the 'health, safety and welfare' at work of all their employees, as well as others on their premises. This guide has been produced to help operators do this.

If the content of these guidance notes relate to operations within your facility, it is recommended your risk assessments, policies, procedures and training are reviewed to ensure the content provided has been considered.

The guidance provided is not intended to be exhaustive and will be reviewed and added to from time to time by CIMSPA. CIMSPA and their contributors provide no warranty as to its accuracy or completeness.

Should you wish to seek further understanding or justifications for the information covered additional associated resources are listed at the bottom of this guidance note.



RD Docs for Guidance

This guidance note covers:

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Hazards and Risks

Athletics is an inherently dangerous sport. There are many hazards and risks. Hazards can include slips and trips, collision with athletes and equipment, incorrect handling, and poor maintenance.

As with all activities a suitable and sufficient risk assessment should be undertaken before athletics take place. UK Athletics provide support regarding template risk assessments for operators to make specific. Further information on this can be found in the resources section of this guidance.

Safe Set Up

Equipment set up

Each venue should be set up appropriately to cater for the specific disciplines offered.

Moving and setting up equipment can present risks, especially in the context of athletic disciplines where equipment may require technical understanding or present manoeuvrability challenges due to weight and size.

All equipment should be set up in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance. Staff should be routinely trained in how to undertake set ups and appropriate personal protective equipment should be made available. Movement solutions and equipment should be sought for any equipment which poses a significant risk due to its size, shape or weight.

Where coaches wish to assist with the set up of equipment, their involvement should be assessed to establish any foreseeable risks. All risks must be managed appropriately with control measures such as supervision and training.

Where a club wishes to take on the responsibility for setting up equipment without the involvement of the facility staff, this should be identified in the risk assessment. A club's representative's competence and resources should be determined to ensure the manufacturer's guidance is being followed and any known risks identified by the operator are being appropriately controlled. All staff and coaches, prior to public use, must undertake a pre-use inspection of all equipment and facilities in the activity area.

Competition

UK Athletics (UKA) provide detailed guidance for athletic competitions called Safe Athletics – Track & Field Safety Guide for Competition. This provides guidance on the following areas:

- **Track Safety**
- **Starting Safety**
- **Photo Finish Safety**
- **Jumps Safety**
- **Throws Safety**
- **Indoor Competition Safety**

For more information, refer to the useful resources section at the bottom of this guidance.

Equipment Storage

Adequate, secure storage space should be available for the full range of outdoor and/ or indoor equipment - javelins, shots, discus, landing mats, nets, overlay rollout strips, etc. and the associated transport carts and trolleys.

Ample storage space for hurdles and bulky equipment is essential, and ideally should be additional to separate accommodation supplied for the groundsman's equipment, such as tractors and mowers.

Training items should be stored separately from competition equipment and there may be a need for separate storage for schools and community groups.

High jump and pole vault landing areas should be covered/stored to keep them dry and clean when not in use. Controls should be in place to prevent high winds lifting/moving the covers thus endangering people and property. They should be secured to prevent unauthorised access.

Specific guidance for athletics equipment:

Hurdles	These should be stored on a trolley, stacked the normal way up in sets of no more than 20.
Steeplechase Hurdles	These should be stored in the athletics store. If it is impractical to take them indoors after each use or during the winter, then they should be covered over.
Pole Vault Uprights	Where possible, these should be stored in an upright position. If not, then supported at both ends and in the centre. If stored inside, store the sections on their side with wear cover neatly rolled up

Cross Bars	These should be stored on hooks supported in the centre and at the ends or neatly on racks.
Vaulting Poles	These should be kept in their original cardboard tubes or in plastic water pipes, stored horizontally and supported at each end and in the centre.
High Jump Stands	These should ideally be stored upright. Alternatively, store horizontally supported at ends and in the centre. It is acceptable to store on the landing area under the metal cover if this is large enough.
Plasticine	This should be in a sealed bag and kept reasonably warm (20°C).
Rakes	These should be brushed clean after use and stored upright if possible.
Javelins	These should preferably be placed in a rack with points resting on a soft surface (wood is acceptable). The rack should be in a dry area and javelins of the same weight should be kept together.
Shots	These should be stored in a dry place on a wooden rack. Shots of the same weight should be kept together and clearly marked. Training and competition shots should be stored separately.
Discus and Hammers	These should be stored in a dry place on a wooden rack. Equipment of the same weight should be kept together and clearly marked. Training and competition equipment should be stored separately.
Measuring Tapes	Open-reel tapes should be stored on a hanging rack, whereas cased tapes should be stored in a box.
Wind Gauge, Weighting Scales	This should be stored in the original box in a dry place.
Scoreboards	These should be kept upright and assembled if possible, otherwise the top should be removed from the base and stored upside down.
Starter Pistol	Procedures should be in place to ensure only accredited users have access and use of this equipment. A noise risk assessment should also be completed with suitable controls in place. Where possible electronic starter guns should be used.

Foam Mats

Foam mats are known to present a fire risk and should be stored so that a fire occurring in them will not jeopardise a means of escape from the premises. The following precautions should be implemented:

- **Mats should be stored flat to present the least amount of surface area over which flames could travel vertically**
- **Mats should be stored separately from any other easily ignited materials**
- **Storage should be tidy with access being maintained both to the store and within it**
- **There should be no source of heat likely to ignite any material within the store**
- **Luminaires within the store should be of the protected type (e.g. bulkhead or enclosed)**
- **The store should not form part of a general circulation area**
- **Mats should be maintained to ensure no exposed foam is evident.**

All equipment should be stored in conditions in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance.

Maintenance, checks and inspections

Good facility maintenance and management help to ensure the safety of all users. The provision of competent facility maintenance staff (whether paid or as part of a volunteer role), is essential for overseeing periodic inspections, preventive maintenance measures, and repairs; all of which directly contribute to the safe operation of athletic facilities.

Internal Inspections

A formal maintenance programme and system of regular safety inspections must be in place at the facility. The UKA's Track Operator Handbook and Equipment Maintenance Guidance provides guidance and checks sheets for facilities to do this. This includes daily, monthly annual and a competition check list. A link to this information can be found at the bottom of this guidance.

External Inspections

UKA recommend long/triple jump facilities and cage inspections to be carried out by an approved member of Sports and Play Construction Association's (SAPCA) Track and Field division and cage load tests completed by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The sacrificial section of the hammer cage netting should be tested on an annual basis by an approved contractor. It is a requirement for a UKA Track and Field Measurement and Levels Survey to be conducted by a UKA approved surveyor in order for the track to become Track Mark accredited.

The Track

Track surfaces should be well maintained and well-presented including clear lines and track markings with any kerbing fixed and safe.

Areas of concern include uneven surfaces, bobbling, moss growth, delamination, cracks, lack of texture, hard or slippery surfaces, water-retention and the build-up of vegetation.

Tracks must meet the requirements of the British Standard for outdoor synthetic surface shock absorbency: EN 14808:2005. The International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) also have track surface standards.

The Field

All field event (throws and jumps) facilities should be well maintained and well presented.

- **Hammer/discus cage: Compliant specification, no holes in netting, netting secured at base level and steel structure and circle(s) in good condition**
- **Pole vault and high jump landing beds: Compliant specification, well maintained and in good condition**

- **Horizontal jumps: Protected edges in landing areas, well maintained sand condition/levels**
- **All field event runways are well maintained, clean and level**
- **Suitable controls in place to prevent anyone falling into the steeplechase pit when not in use**

Information on compliance requirements for the new UKA specification for throw cages can be downloaded from the UK Athletics webpage. All new/replacement hammer/combined hammer and discus cage installations MUST be IAAF certified (i.e. have an IAAF certification number that is valid at the time of installation).

Flood Lighting

Consistent illumination levels across both track and field facilities must be achieved: 200lux for club venues and 500 lux for international/premier. Floodlighting columns should be positioned at least 4 metres from the edge of any track/activity area and should be maintained and checked regularly.

Floodlights should be subject to an annual service (by a competent contractor), or lights cleaned at least once a year and their alignment checked. Floodlights should be included in the facility's fixed electrical installation inspection certification process.

The floodlight bolts should be subject to a non-destructive testing (NDT) inspection every 12 years.

TrackMark

TrackMark is UK Athletics' quality assurance scheme for outdoor Track & Field Athletics facilities. A venue that achieves TrackMark status is recognised by UKA as having well managed and well-maintained facilities that are accessible to participants of all abilities.

TrackMark accreditation is broken down into six units and is open to any facility that has track and/or field facilities. (see table below)

Ref:	Accreditation	Assessment
Unit 1	Track	Independent track surface test is conducted by a SAPCA approved, IAAF accredited laboratory at least every 3 years. The standard inspection regime includes a four point assessment of all synthetic areas including the running track, horizontal and vertical jump runways/take off areas, safety margins and any synthetic D areas. This includes a visual inspection, thickness test, shock absorption and a slip test.
Unit 2	Field	Throws and jumps facilities, field layout, safety equipment and disability provision.
Unit 3	Ancillary	Disability access, toilets, changing rooms, car parking, storage, clubroom/social areas and multi-purpose rooms.
Unit 4	Operations	Staff/volunteer training, maintenance/inspection regimes, safety management.
Unit 5	Floodlighting	Track and field lighting plans and lux levels.
Unit 6	Competition	Track: Valid measurement and levels survey for all track events. Field: Valid measurement and levels survey for all field events.

Each unit has a set of assessment criteria. Tests on these areas will be given a green, amber or red rating.

For tracks wanting to host a licenced competition, host venue must have achieved OR demonstrated a committed to working towards TrackMark. There are different assessment criterion depending on the level of licence required

Accreditation lasts for a period of 3 years, after which time the facility operator is required to re-accredit.

Supervision and Training

The supervision of athletics activities should be undertaken by a competent person. The level of supervision should be considered as a part of the risk assessment process. Aspects such as the age, experience and type of activity taking place should be considered.

The following describes the different qualification pathways available to help ensure competent supervision and coaching.

Coaching Assistant Award

Coaching Assistant Award provides prospective coaches with an introduction to coaching athletics via a range of running, jumping and throwing skills and activities. It focuses on the introduction of the fundamental movement skills that underpin athletic activities. To support the multi-event approach for developing athletes, coaching assistants will be expected to assist in the delivery of a range of sessions that develop the running, jumping and throwing skills in their club.

The time commitment required to gain the award is usually two days and once qualified, the assistant can help any Licenced Coach who is present at the same facility.

Athletics Coach

The 'coach' role is designed to allow those who wish to dedicate themselves to practising the art and science of coaching athletics to do so in an unsupervised manner.

Candidates will be able to plan a progressive training programme for athletes, coaching a range of activities to prepare the developing athlete to run, jump and throw. Candidates will be able to start refining their coaching in one chosen technical event group area. When qualified he/she will be insured to coach without supervision.

The programme has been designed to support coaches in working with athletes in the foundation up to event group development stage (typically under 18s) and advocates a multi-event approach in the development of athletes.

Event Group

The Event Group Coach programme is designed to provide licensed athletics coaches with a greater understanding and awareness of the issues involved with coaching athletes at the Event Group Development stage of the athlete development pathway.

Leadership in Running Fitness

This course is designed to prepare and provide a safe and enjoyable running experience for young people over 12 years of age and adults of any ability, size or shape. The course covers risk assessments, warm-ups, cool downs, and how to lead fun running sessions for a mixed ability group of runners.

Coaching in Running Fitness

This running fitness qualification is the cornerstone of the Off-Track Pathway. It is primarily for those working with off-track runners who wish to improve their fitness. All applicants must be active leaders or coaches who have completed as a minimum a Level 1 Assistant Coach, Fitness in Running & Walking, Leadership in Running Fitness or Coaching Assistant qualification.

Athlete to Coach

The British Athletics Athlete to Coach Programme is a bespoke programme, which aims to provide athletes transitioning into coaching with the competencies required to be licensed as a British Athletics Coach.

All coaches should be suitably trained through qualifications aligned to the CIMSPA professional standards

UKA encourages all athletics coaches to apply to UKA for a coach licence. The coach licence provides evidence that the coach has met a minimum level of training, and gives assurance to athletes that the coach is insured by UKA. A coach licence shall remain in force for a period of three years from the date issued.

Competency for Track and Field Management

At least one member of staff or volunteer based at the venue must have successfully completed UKA's online Track & Field Management Course.

Insurance

UK Athletics Insurance provides UKA coaches with public liability and third party insurance, personal accident insurance and travel insurance for all events organised by affiliated bodies. Coaches should always ensure that they have the necessary insurance cover for any activities that they undertake.

UKA affiliated clubs or organisations, are automatically provided with insurance cover relating to the club's 'athletics activities'. This not only means training and competitions, but also club / region administrative meetings, social and fund raising activities organised by the club.

Emergency Procedures and first aid

Having an emergency action plan (EAP) for athletes and others at the facility can be the difference between life and death.

EAPs provide a systematic approach to addressing medical, environmental and security emergencies. Plans should be tailored to an organisation's specific facility, resources, and personnel. They should include, for example, procedures for summoning help, maps of the fields and access points for emergency vehicles (which could include air ambulance location), as well as the location and inventory of medical equipment such as defibrillators, which should be easily accessible. Consideration should be given to how these requirements will change depending on if an athletics event is taking place and the presence of spectators. These should be considered with risk assessments, which includes off site training.

The EAP should assign roles and designate a chain of command. Critical aspects include not only medical personnel and procedures but also processes for initiating local emergency services, communicating with coaches, athletes, and family members and documenting catastrophic injuries.

If a 'serious' medical emergency occurs then immediate first aid should be given by a trained first aider. UKA state:

- **First aiders should be aware of any allergies a participant has in relation to first aid (e.g. plasters)**
- **Coaches and club administrators must have ICE contact details (In Case of Emergency) for all participants**
- **Clubs should ensure that there is at least one qualified first aider at every training session. Note: The requirement for additional first aiders should be based upon the first aid risk assessment**
- **Accidents, incidents or near misses are recorded using UKA's online incident reporting system.**

Other types of medical emergencies to consider are head and spinal injuries and heat related issues.

Examples of other emergencies to consider include, fire, floodlight failure, outside threats, suspicious packages and adverse weather. The emergency procedures should be decided based on the type of facility and events taking place.

For guidance on adverse weather refer to the CIMSPA Adverse Weather guidance

Useful Resources

Sport England Design Guidance note; Athletics

<https://www.sportengland.org/media/4221/athletics.pdf>

UK Athletics; UK Athletics Track Operators Handbook

<http://www.uka.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/UKA-Track-Operator-Handbook.pdf>

UK Athletics; Safe Athletics

<http://www.britishathletics.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/health-and-safety/Safe-Athletics-Competition-Printer-Friendly.pdf>

Fire Service Circular;

https://www.ukfrs.com/sites/default/files/2017-09/Fire%20Service%20Circular%201_1988.pdf

Track Certification:

<https://www.uka.org.uk/governance/facilities/track-certification/>

Activity Alliance - Sport Access for All: Opening Doors Guidance:

http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/assets/000/000/045/Access_for_all_November_2015_original.pdf?1457371169

Sport England Athletics Design Guide:

<https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/athletics.pdf>

UkAthletics Operator Handbook:

<https://www.uka.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/UKA-Track-Operator-Handbook.pdf>

Safe Athletics – Track & Field Safety Guide for Competition.

<https://www.britishathletics.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/health-and-safety/Safe-Athletics-Competition-Booklet.pdf>

Approved Code of Practice for the safe conduct of track and field training

<https://www.britishathletics.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/health-and-safety/Code-of-Practice-Training-updated-Sept-2020.pdf>

These guidance notes have been produced by Right Directions in partnership with CIMSPA.

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