

Outdoor Facilities Including Courts

Area: Dry Facilities **Category:** Operations

Introduction

This guidance note provides an overview of the operation of outdoor facilities. The information within this guidance is not intended to be exhaustive and has been formulated based on common queries from CIMSPA members.

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 aspects of your operation, it is recommended you review your risk assessments, policies, procedures, safe systems of work and training to ensure the content provided has been considered. This includes normal and emergency operating procedures and the identification of training requirements. It should be used in conjunction with the CIMSPA guidance on goalpost safety.

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:

- Safe set up
 - Pitch dimensions
 - Line marking
 - Shelters
 - Pitch dividers
 - Tennis equipment
 - Basketball equipment
- Operational standards
 - Antisocial behaviour by spectators
 - Antisocial behaviour by unauthorised users
 - Preventing unauthorised access (trespassers)
 - Adverse weather and determining fitness for play
 - Acceptable footwear on synthetic pitches
- Maintenance, checks and inspections
 - Outdoor equipment installation and storage
 - Bowling green maintenance guidelines
 - Cricket pitches and outfield maintenance guidance
 - Management and maintenance of dual use cricket and football sites
 - Synthetic pitch maintenance and inspection
 - Tennis court maintenance
- Supervision and training
- Emergency procedures and first aid

Safe set up

Pitch dimensions

Pitches in the past have been marked out using the maximum and minimum pitches sizes as outlined in the laws of the game. These sizes vary tremendously, are often adapted to fit the space available and have been open to local interpretation. Sport England: Comparative Sizes of Sports Pitches & Courts, September 2015 provides an overview of pitch sizes for many sports. In addition to this, each governing body of sport provides more up to date guidance on the pitch sizes and dimensions, as well as other aspects such as goal sizes.

When considering pitch sizes, it is important to note that the run-off area beyond the pitch should be free of any obstacle (including dugouts and floodlight columns) to ensure players and officials do not injure themselves by running into any fixed object. The run-offs should be surfaced with exactly the same surface as the playing area. For football, tarmac and concrete are not allowed, but 3G football turf is allowed for match officials run-offs. The size of run-off is documented in the government body of sport standards.

Line marking

It is a requirement to carry out risk assessments of the line marking task in relation to the nature of the hazard, degree of risk and the actions taken to minimise the risk, this includes conducting a COSHH risk assessment for the substances being used.

If line marking is carried out by contractors, then a specification should be drawn up to outline any safeguards to be adhered to whilst undertaking the task. Contractors should provide risk assessments and any safe systems of work for completing the task.

Shelters

Aluminium team shelters are designed to be permanently fixed to an appropriate, prepared surface. The correct amount of fixings should be used dependent on the size of the shelter, in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines.

When moving shelters, the correct number of competent persons are required, as recommended by the manufacturer's guidance and manufacturing risk assessment.

Shelters should never be left unsecured.

Pitch Dividers

Pitch divider systems are designed to have wire as a permanent fixture which should not be removed on a regular basis.

If wire is required to be taken down, release the pressure on the wire, detach from anchor post, coil and tie it off, then store the wire in the pouch with the netting.

Pitch divider netting is retractable and should be stored in a storage pouch.

The netting must be retracted using a 'pull and draw' system. This is achieved by standing at the storage end of the system and by slowly pulling the net inwards until all the netting has been gathered.

Tennis equipment

Freestanding tennis posts should only be moved by means of transporter trolleys, unless the posts have been completely dismantled.

A minimum of two transporter trolleys must be used per set of posts.

Posts should not be stored on trolleys at any time.

Only use trolleys that are specifically made for transporting tennis posts. Two competent persons are required to lift each end of the posts onto the trolley. Use fixing bolts to secure the posts on trolleys before attempting to move.

Care should be taken not to over-tension the net as this can potentially cause each end of a freestanding tennis post to lift and render the posts unstable.

It is recommended that the net tension is slackened off when the posts are not in use.

It is recommended the net winder handle be removed if the posts are left unsupervised.

Basketball equipment

Due to the size and weight of the uprights, mechanical lifting equipment must be used when installing or assembling posts.

Ground sockets require a minimum 1m cube of concrete.

Cantilever arms can only be height adjusted before installation.

Slamdunk rings must not be used with standard wooden boards and fixing.

Manufacturer's guidance should be followed when setting up, taking down and inspecting basketball nets. Staff who do this should be appropriately trained.

Operational standards

Antisocial behaviour by spectators

The FA designated spectators' areas were introduced as a response to concern surrounding some touchline spectator behaviour, particularly in youth football, however the concept can be applied to all spectators in a sports setting.

The areas draw the line which spectators should not cross. It deters them from standing on the touchline or infringing onto the pitch and creates a clearer distinction between those who are there to spectate and those with a responsibility to coach and manage.

The recommended arrangement is to mark out a designated spectators' area on the opposite side of the pitch to club officials (manager/coaches etc), for spectators to stand behind. The designated spectators' area should ideally start three yards from the touchline. The area should run the full length of the pitch. Ideally, no spectators should be watching from behind the goal. More details can be found in the FA Guide to Pitch and Goalpost Dimensions.

Antisocial behaviour by unauthorised users

Users on outdoor pitches can sometimes be subjected to antisocial/threatening behaviour from youths playing football on the pitch without booking it.

Whilst there is an onus on the staff to attend to the situation and try and resolve the problems created by unauthorised users, staff cannot be reasonably expected to put themselves at unacceptable risk. They can ask them to leave, but beyond that then it's a matter for the police to deal with trespass. An incident report form should be completed following the event.

Provided the above steps have been taken, it is unlikely there will be sympathy from the courts for a trespasser who gets injured because of the activity taken.

The trespassers have a responsibility to take due care for their own safety, although in the case of children, this responsibility is much lower and if there is a reasonable risk of being injured, the activity should be halted.

Preventing unauthorised access (trespasses)

Many operators of outdoor pitches have problems when the gate is locked with children/teenagers climbing over the fence to play. There are a number of common questions associated with such use by trespassers:

- **Is there a liability to the operator if someone is injured scaling the fence?**
- **Is there a liability if a trespasser is injured playing on the pitch?**
- **Is it reasonable just to leave the gate open and let them have free use?**
- **To what extent is it reasonable to erect warning signs or use anti-climb paint?**

An occupier must be prepared for children to be less careful than adults, and, by implication, a greater level of care might be required to keep them from harm. Options to manage this situation could include restricting access or leaving the gate open.

Restricting access - Reasonable attempts should be made to prevent unauthorised access, e.g. anti-climb paint, patrols, and of course locking the gate. Make sure the fence is in satisfactory condition and not a hazard to the trespasser. Under the Occupiers Liability Act 1984, erecting signage does not diminish responsibility in relation to children trespassing.

Leaving the gates open - Providing that the surface and equipment is in a good state of repair and any equipment which may require adult supervision is secure to prevent use, it is unlikely the level of danger in the areas would be enough for a prosecution.

In this case to help reduce the likelihood of trespassing, putting a sign up stating something similar to 'failure to book and pay is trespassing and liable to prosecution' could be considered.

Anti-climb paint should always be applied at least 2 metres above normal access height and its presence should be clearly indicated with warning signs. It is generally accepted that warning signs should be displayed at no more than 3-4 metre intervals and in a position where they are easy to read. Source: <http://www.anti-climb-paint.co.uk/>

Examples of information that should be considered on signage

- No glass or breakable items permitted
- No unauthorised access
- Under no circumstances, should children or adults be allowed to climb on, swing or play with the structure of the goalposts
- Information as to what to do in an emergency
- Types of footwear that can be worn

Acceptable footwear on synthetic pitches

Some manufacturers and suppliers of 3G synthetic pitches provide slightly differing advice on the use of different types of footwear on synthetic pitches. Most identify the footwear not to be used. It is important as a priority that the manufacturer's guidance is followed.

The table below provides a summary of the consolidated recommended footwear guidelines for use on synthetic playing surfaces. The base document is the FA guidance note: Third Generation Football Turf Guidance (2012), with additional consolidated views therein.

	Studs Moulded	Studs Screw In <15mm	Studs Screw In >15mm	Blades	Dimples eg. specialist hockey shoes etc	Flat Soled eg. trainers etc
Third Generation (3G)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Sand-dressed	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Sand Filled	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	Not ideal
Fully Synthetic Carpet	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
	✓	Acceptable				
	✗	Not acceptable				
	Not ideal	Definition given by the English FA				

CIMSPA recommends that the rules of use are attached to any booking forms and to display the information near the entrance to the facility.

It is not the operator's responsibility to physically check the footwear of users before going onto the pitch. However, if a member of staff does spot a user with incorrect footwear, they should bring this to their attention and advise them of the increased risk.

Maintenance, checks and inspections

This section provides specific guidance on the maintenance of different types of outdoor facilities. In addition to this, guidance pre-use daily checks should take place on the condition of these areas. These checks should consider aspects such as ice, snow, debris, potholes and the condition of fencing and floodlights.

Bowling green maintenance guidelines

The Bowls England Greens Maintenance Advisory Service provides practical, independent advice and assistance to affiliated clubs regarding all issues related to the bowling surface. A link to this service and to other information on bowling green maintenance can be found in the resources section of this guidance. Those who conduct maintenance of bowls greens must be competent to do so. This may be demonstrated through years of experience, however, CIMSPA endorsed training providers are recommended for individuals with less experience or require refresher training. Training providers should be Lantra accredited.

Some key areas that should be considered when maintaining bowls greens are:

- Scarify to remove dead and dying material and let in air to stimulate growth.
- Aeration is essential to grass health to get air and water to the roots.
- Ensure regular mowing of the green during the summer. Mow the green every other day, dependent upon the height of grass required.
- Adjust mower settings to suit the conditions and season.
- Monitor for any signs of disease, infection or general deterioration.
- Prepare for and deal with the impact of inclement weather, including flooding.
- Fertilise to supply nutrients to the grass plants, ensuring healthy growth. This should be completed after a nutrient analysis test has been carried out and by following the manufacturer's instructions for the fertiliser.
- Top dress in the autumn to finish off an autumn renovation. This normally consists of sandy soil or suitable compound.
- Apply quality grass seed after aerating and before top dressing.
- Keep the green well-watered in dry weather, utilising an irrigation system.
- Ensure gullies are in good condition, including the wooden border, to protect damage to the outer edging and bowls.

Note: How the green is used and rink etiquette are very important. The less damage that occurs to the green, the longer the green can be in play.

Wheelchair users should have access to the green made available by incorporating a concrete or wooden ramp from the path to the green surface. The use of wheelchairs will not damage the surface of a well-managed green.

Management and maintenance of dual use cricket and football sites

There are many benefits to a successfully managed joint site which, working together, can provide a sustainable future for those parties involved. The Institute of Ground keepers, ECB, The FA and Sport England have provided a guidance document called Successful Management of Dual Use Cricket and Football Sites.

The aim of this document is to provide a practical guide to organisations that manage playing field sites, with football and cricket pitches, to ensure the long-term future and viability of the site. This guide will provide facility operators with a greater understanding on the following:

- **Identifying a clear decision-making process.**
- **Improved financial planning for the site.**
- **Understanding of the technical knowledge and experience required to maintain sports pitches.**
- **Improved maintenance and repair regime on the pitches.**
- **Improved pitch layout and effective use of the site.**

More details about this document can be found in the resources section of this guidance.

Synthetic pitch maintenance and inspection

All pitches should be inspected before use to ensure they are safe to use. This should include checks on the playing surface, any fencing/boundaries and equipment. For more detailed guidance on goal posts, refer to the CIMSPA Goal Post guidance.

Synthetic turf pitches are fully permeable and hard-wearing, however, to ensure that the surface continues to meet the specific performance requirements throughout the pitches' life, a degree of maintenance is essential.

Types of maintenance will differ depending on the type of surface, such as sand-based, sand-dressed, 3rd generation or unfilled. Consequently, it is essential to follow the instructions provided by the carpet manufacturer and installer to ensure the correct methodology is applied.

This section provides some basic guidance on the maintenance of synthetic sports pitches derived from Sports and Play Construction Association Code of Practice (SAPCA).

Keeping the surface clean

Leaves, tree flowers, pine needles and other detritus should not be allowed to remain on the surface for any length of time. A wide soft broom or a rubber-tined rake is ideal for removing vegetable matter and other rubbish. Better still, a mechanical leaf-sweeper or vacuum cleaner will greatly speed up the operation.

The provision of litter bins and an information board outlining do's and don'ts will also help to keep the surface clear of rubbish brought on by players and users of the facility. It is strongly recommended that the pitch should be treated as a 'no smoking' area, since a dropped cigarette can melt the fibres down to the surface, leaving an unsightly mark. Chewing gum should also be banned.

Grooming

Grooming prevents the premature deterioration of play characteristics, appearance and drainage properties. Brushing can delay the time when problems of reduced drainage start to develop by several years. This involves drag brushing, using a specified brush or matting ideally in both directions each time. The frequency of grooming depends on the amount of use the pitch receives. Once a week is a recommended norm, but it may be advisable to brush more often if the pitch is heavily used, shaded or subject to pollution. The use of power brushing machines may be required for third generation rubber surfaces, which might be required up to four times per year depending upon usage and the environment.

Deep cleaning

If the surface becomes over-compacted and impervious (after heavy rain), deep cleaning may be required to improve ball, roll and foot interaction. This should only be carried out by experienced operatives. Power washing of filled surfaces should be avoided as the action of the water on the fill can mix the contaminants through the depth of the pile and increase clogging of the through drainage.

Snow and ice

If it is important to remove the snow to enable play to start sooner than would otherwise be the case, brushes or wooden scrapers may be used. Metal shovels or scrapers may damage the surface and should not be permitted. Rock salt and chemical de-icing agents should not be used. In certain cases, vacuum-dried salt or urea have been used as effective preventatives when applied in advance of the weather deteriorating.

Typical maintenance schedule

The following are minimum recommendations, alongside manufacturers recommendations:

Daily - at end of the day's play:

- Check fixtures and fittings
- Make sure gates are shut
- Check and top-up fill levels at penalty spots, short corners, etc. (filled only)

Weekly:

- Clear leaves and rubbish from the area
- Deal with any new weeds, moss or algae and brush the surface of the pitch

Monthly:

- Check infill levels (filled only)
- Outside the fence, check and clear mowing strips and check cleanliness of access paths, check seams, inlaid lines, etc, and report failures to the installer
- Check the irrigation system (if required).

Periodically - at least every six months:

- Check thoroughly for moss and algae growth, food stains, etc, and remedy as appropriate. Treat pitch with moss killer, algaecide, etc.
- Power brush to help keep the infill mobile and the carpet fibres erect (filled only)

Annually:

- Call the installer if any aspect is causing significant concern

If irrigation systems are being used, there may be legionella testing requirements. These requirements will be documented with the organisations Legionella Risk Assessment

Tennis court maintenance

The maintenance requirement of tennis is different depending on the surface installed. The SAPCA Code of Practice for the Construction and Maintenance of Tennis Courts provide detailed guidance on the maintenance of these tennis courts.

Supervision and Training

All staff should receive appropriate training. The following should be considered:

- The facility, including the composition, function and correct set up of equipment
- How to carry out routine inspections
- The correct action and reporting procedure if hazards or defects are discovered during inspection or while the equipment is in use
- Monitoring users, with emphasis upon the enforcement of the rules and security.
- Emergency procedures including first aid and power failure. Emergency procedures should be site specific.

It is recommended that staff should receive refresher training in maintaining safety at their premises.

Emergency procedures and first aid

It is important to ensure that emergency situations are dealt with in a manner which minimises the risk to customers and staff members. Emergency procedures provide a systematic approach to addressing medical, environmental and security emergencies. Plans should be tailored to an organisation's specific venue, resources, and personnel. Emergency plans should assign roles and designate a chain of command. Relevant staff must be trained and competent to deal with them. Emergencies to consider on outdoor pitches and courts are:

- **First aid**
- **Power failure (floodlights)**
- **Adverse weather**

First aid

A first-aid needs assessment, specifically for visitors to the facility should be undertaken. The level of first-aid provision for visitors should be considered as part of this assessment. Particular consideration should be given as to how quickly users can gain access to first-aid provision, particularly in large, more remote outdoor areas. Consideration should also be given as to the access to emergency services, trained staff, a means of communication with facility staff and emergency equipment. For example, emergency numbers and the location of the AED could be displayed on signage at the entrance to the outdoor facilities.

Power failure (floodlights)

Power failure of the floodlights has the potential for users to be left in complete darkness. It is important that facility operators are aware of this and can provide adequate support (use of torches) to get people off the pitch or court safely.

Adverse Weather

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

Useful Resources

Comparative sizes of sports pitches & courts Sept 2015 update

https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/comparative-sizes-outdoor.pdf?VersionId=_YRYzA3jqXXbMqySFXKorqke5RPoRHRn

FIH Hockey Field Specifications

<http://www.fih.ch/media/12500213/hockey-field-specifications-hockey-series-finals.pdf>

FIH Handbook of Performance, Durability and Construction Requirements for Synthetic Turf Hockey Pitches (2013) <http://www.fih.ch/files/Sport/Pitches/2013%20May%20Pitch%20Handbook.pdf>

Third Generation Football Turf Guidance, The Football Association (English), 2012. www.thefa.com

The SAPCA Code of Practice for the Construction and Maintenance of Tennis Courts

https://sapca.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/01/Code_of_Practice_TC_3rdEd_170418_02.pdf

Recommended Guideline for the construction, preparation and maintenance of cricket pitches and outfielders at all levels of the game

<https://foundation.lancashirecricket.co.uk/media/1654/recommended-guidelines-for-the-construction-preparation-and-maintenance-of-cricket-pitches-and-outfields.pdf>

Successful Management of Dual use Cricket and Football Sites.

<https://www.sportengland.org/media/4468/successful-management-of-dual-use-cricket-and-football-sites-12256.pdf>

FA guide to Pitch and Goalpost Dimensions

<https://www.thefa.com/-/media/cfa/eastridingfa/files/rules-and-regulations/fa-guide-to-pitch-dimensions-and-goalpost-dimensions---imperial.ashx>

Harmful cleats of football boots: A biomechanical evaluation, University of Dundee Institute of Motion Analysis and Research, 2010 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21783074/>

The Effects of Playing Surfaces and Footwear on Biomechanical Response of Soccer Players, Daniel Craig, University of Exeter PhD Study, January 2010.

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Effect-of-Playing-Surfaces-and-Footwear-on-the-Low/5da70c6afa88c04f29cd6c23a55cc0c2d0fd1624>

Artificial Surfaces for Outdoor Sport - Updated guidance for 2013 www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/outdoor-surfaces

The SAPCA Code of Practice for the Construction and Maintenance of Synthetic Turf Sports Pitches <https://sapca.org.uk/>

The Bowls England Greens Maintenance Advisory Service

www.bowlsengland.com/greens-advisory-service/

Lantra www.lantra.co.uk/

CIMSPA Goalpost Safety Guidance

CIMSPA professional standards library:

<https://www.cimspa.co.uk/education-training/professional-standards/>

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

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