

Organising a safe event

Events can be difficult to organise but there are ways to manage the risks. This factsheet will help you to run a safer event with both general guidance and specific tips on firework displays, bonfires, fetes, and bouncy castles.

General Guidance

Whatever type of event you're running, there are some basics you'll need to organise. While some may not apply to your specific event, the following points make a handy checklist to work through.

- Make sure you are up to date with the latest legislation, such as regulations on entertainment and alcohol licensing, and fire safety.
- Carry out site inspections right up to the day of the event, using an agreed checklist. Keep a record of this and actions you've taken to resolve any problems.
- Liaise with local enforcement authorities, vendors, exhibitors and performers before the event.

Events can be great fundraising opportunities, and with the right preparations you can make sure everyone enjoys themselves in safety.

- Decide how people will access and leave the site. Make sure there is separate access for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Ensure you have plenty of clear signage and trained stewards.
- Make sure you have emergency procedures in place to deal with any incident. Have an emergency plan and test it with stewards and organisers before the event.
- Put suitable accident reporting procedures in place, as well as processes for dealing with lost children.

- Arrange adequate first aid provision with St John Ambulance or similar, and ensure you have enough up-to-date first aid kits for the expected number of visitors.
- Set out rules on alcohol.
- Decide how best to position attractions and check the competence of the operators.
- Make sure caterers are registered with their local Environmental Health department, have a valid food hygiene certificate and adequate food waste disposal arrangements.
- Check the competency and insurance of contractors.
- Make sure sanitary facilities are sufficient.
- Identify the types of waste your event will produce and plan how best to collect and recycle or dispose of it. Don't forget about raising awareness about waste management and make sure you have plenty of bins.
- When your event is finished, make sure the site is safe and cleaned up. Carry out a final site inspection to identify any problems that need to be resolved.
- Finally, hold a debrief meeting and use it as a valuable learning experience for the next event you organise.

Call the
Village Halls Plus
Group on
0845 478 6386

Firework displays

Protecting the public and those involved in the event must be your main priority. It's therefore important to organise adequate stewarding and signposting for large events, consider disabled access, and ensure easy access for the emergency services. You should provide fire extinguishers, buckets of sand and water, and first aid points manned by qualified first-aiders. The bulk storage of fireworks could require a licence, so you should check with your local authority.

Handling fireworks

Handling and storing fireworks requires the greatest of care and should ideally be carried out by specialists. If this proves impractical, you should select a limited number of experienced adults and equip them with torches. Don't launch fireworks over the spectator area.

Display area

Make sure the display area is at least half the size of a football pitch (90m by 120m) and spectators are 25 metres or more away from the fireworks, with their backs to the prevailing wind. If the wind is strong or changeable, you may need to postpone the event.

Keep a large area clear for fireworks to land in, well away from buildings.

The site needs as many unobstructed entrances and exits as possible, with signs at the entrances prohibiting private fireworks. Also, buy fireworks from a reputable supplier and make sure they conform to British Standard 7114.

You'll also need:

- easily identifiable crowd control stewards wearing high-visibility clothing
- a set drill for calling the emergency services
- a public address system.

Equip people with leather gloves and tongs for collecting all spent fireworks after the display. Place failed fireworks in water and consult the fire service. Only burn used fireworks after all spectators have departed. Preferably, the fireworks should be immersed in water and then buried.

If staff or volunteers are engaged in lighting fireworks, think of the noise they're going to have to endure (hearing protection may be necessary). If contractors are employed to run the event, then select them carefully and agree safety procedures in advance.

Bonfires

Give one specific person control of the bonfire and make sure no flammable liquids are used. Don't introduce items such as aerosols or foam-filled furniture.

Tell the public not to bring fuel for the fire, and only burn things like pallets from a known source. Before lighting the fire, check it for young children and animals. Make sure the bonfire is completely extinguished after the event.

Fetes

Even a fete carries its risks, and you must still maintain reasonable standards of safety. Much depends on the scale, the people attending, and the types of activities.

Proper control of visitors and vehicles is important, particularly in the case of car boot sales where a large number of vehicles will be coming and going. Organise adequate stewarding and signposting for large events, and don't forget easy access for the emergency services.

Check sites in advance to make sure that they are in acceptable condition and keep a record of the inspection. You need to inspect furniture and other equipment supplied by others too. If performers are taking part, examine their public liability insurance.

Bouncy castles

Health and Safety Executive Guidance Note PM 76 contains valuable safety advice on bouncy castles. The main points to consider are:

- there should be adequate supervision by the operator or by a trained person representing the organiser
- the operator and/or attendants should supervise the activity constantly
- the operator and/or attendant should use a whistle or other signal and take action at the first signs of misbehaviour
- the device should be anchored in line with the manufacturer's recommendations
- bouncy castles should not be used in adverse weather conditions
- numbers and ages must be controlled
- there should be no mix of children of different sizes, or with adults unless the equipment is specifically designed for that purpose
- no somersaults, back or front flips
- spectators should be kept behind a barrier at a safe distance
- use should be restricted to children
- the surface in front of, or adjacent to, the open sides of the castle should be covered by a gym mat or other soft landing material between 3cm and 12cm thick.
- if the air blowers are mains powered they should run at low voltage. Make sure you ask for evidence of electrical testing.

Find out more

If you'd like to find out more about village hall insurance, please:

- **read the rest of the factsheets available in this series – 'Making sure your village hall has the right insurance', 'The benefits of managing risk' and 'Protecting village hall trustees'.**
- **call the Village Halls Plus Group on 0845 478 6386 to discuss your insurance needs and request a copy of our 'Making insurance simple' and 'Making risk management simple' guides.**



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