

MANAGING RISKS AT IMECHE VOLUNTEER-ORGANISED EVENTS

Your duties as an IMechE event organiser

An overview of **Health & Safety Responsibilities** is provided later in this document. The principle to which you must adhere is that, as an event organiser or someone helping at an IMechE volunteer-organised: you are responsible for the safety everyone attending or participating in an event.

Committees also frequently delegate **financial and event marketing responsibilities** to event organisers.

- Please bear in mind that IMechE Volunteers are bound by the guidelines published on the IMechE website (see: <http://nearyou.imeche.org/docs/volunteer-resource-centre---committee-guidelines-and-rules/uk-financial-guidelines.doc?sfvrsn=2>). Organisers **MUST** work closely with their Region or Area Committees to ensure that all expenditure is correctly approved and recorded.
- Cancelled events and event with few attendees generate reputational and financial risks for which you are responsible. It goes without saying that if you don't give people plenty of notice about events and other activities, they are unlikely to attend. A good rule of thumb is that event details (title, speakers, venue, location, timings, pricing information, booking information) should be published on the IMechE website at least three months before the date of the event. Rarely, this is not necessary but the further in advance you can publish details about your event, the more likely it is that people will come.

High level risks

IMechE Volunteers organising events and activities should pay particular attention to the following high-level risks.

Participatory events – most of our events are talks, lectures and presentations. These are usually very low risk. Some of our events though – such as Challenges - involve participation by volunteers or the public, with hands-on involvement with machinery or physical activities. If your event involves something other than people sitting in a room listening to a talk, you should be very careful that everyone understand the risks involved, what the safety guidelines are and what you are going to do if something goes wrong.

Visits – a significant proportion of our activities are visits to places of work, such as factories, military bases and other places where machinery is installed and may be running or vehicles are in use. Visit organisers are not responsible for the safety of the site but they are at least partly responsible for the safety of the people who are taking part in the tour or visit. You must make sure people understand that sticking their fingers in to rotating machinery, walking backwards while composing photographs and straying onto areas where vehicles may be passing is not safe. Talk to the host and make sure they give proper safety briefing at the outset and that people are wearing appropriate protective clothing, if required.

Insurance – IMechE provides an insurance policy that covers most of the events we run but please ensure that you check the insurance schedule and ask the insurer themselves if you have any doubts that the insurance covers you and the Institution. If not, you must get adequate insurance cover. This is particularly relevant for visits and participatory events.

Vulnerable people – we organise a large number of events that are attended by children and other vulnerable people. As an event organiser, you have special responsibility for their safety and security, including their contact with members of the public. If you are visiting a school, the school is responsible for their health and safety but be aware that if you are demonstrating something at the school or getting children to participate in activities, you must check with the school first and ensure that any material you use is safe. Be mindful of other vulnerable groups, including people with mobility problems, since you will need to ensure that venues and activities are safe and accessible to them.

Simple hazards – even in venues where you are holding low risk activities, you need to be mindful of commonplace hazards such as: access problems (make sure fire exits are clear and that instructions are given at the start, in the event of an alarm or accident) ; electricity and use of equipment (people must know what they are doing if they are using equipment) ; “trip hazards” must be cleared or clearly identified ; security, since regrettably theft is common at open door events ; fire regulations must be adhered to and you must keep a record of who is attending such that you can ensure everyone is safe and out of danger in case of a site (this means you must keep a record of attendees, even if people grumble about signing in at the start of events, since it is you who are responsible for their safety).

Reputation – as an IMechE volunteer, you are responsible for upholding the good reputation of the Institution, the venue at which you are holding your event and the people or organisations that are being discussed or represented there. We do expect event publicity to conform to the IMechE brand guidelines (which are provided on the IMechE website) and you can ask the IMechE team to help you sort this out. You must ensure that people behave themselves, are polite and are sensitive to contemporary norms in terms of comments about gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality age etc. If someone attending is impolite or behaves inappropriately, the Chair or event organiser must intervene.

Alcohol – IMechE volunteers organise events with a social aspect and alcohol is frequently made available. Please ensure that people drink responsibly and do not serve alcohol to people who are obviously drunk. Every effort must be made to ensure that people do not drink and drive or operate any machinery if they have been drinking. We trust you to ensure common sense prevails.

Intellectual property – intellectual property rights are a complex legal area but there are some simple guidelines that will help you keep in line with the spirit of the law. The activity most likely to get IMechE Volunteers in to difficulty is the use of images taken from the internet for use in promotional materials ; this is especially risky when using these materials online. Google image search provides a filter that should help you to identify ‘royalty free’ images. After searching in google images, click on the ‘*Search tools*’ option and underneath there is a drop down menu offering the chance to filter the results by ‘*Usage rights*’. You should choose a suitable option from the list and avoid using images returned under ‘Not filtered by licence’. It may be worth you acknowledging on any materials that use images where you got that image from. The content of presentations is the responsibility of the person presented but please get explicit, written consent to republish their presentation if you plan to make it available online or send it out by email.

Checklist for Event Organisers

Are there children or vulnerable people present and, if you, have you made sure that adequate supervision is in place to ensure their safety?

Do volunteers or guests have to wear any protective clothing or equipment and that they have it or can be supplied it?

Do you have an "In case of Fire or Emergency" announcement to read out at the beginning of the event and that someone has agreed to read it out?

Has your committee or its responsible officers agreed to any expenditure you are agreeing to on IMechE's behalf?

Have you checked that any equipment is safe and that anyone who will be using it knows what they are doing?

Have you checked that the entrance, fire exits and passageways are clear of obstructions and things that people might trip over?

Have you checked that the IMechE Insurance covers your event? (read the insurance schedule and, if in doubt, contact the insurer).

Have you checked that the venue has health & safety guidelines and insurance themselves? (please check the documents)

Have you collected the names (and number) of volunteers and guests present before the event begins, so you can check them off in case of evacuation?

Have you taken a note of the steps you have taken to ensure safety and security at the event, in case you are asked about it afterwards?

If you are serving food and drink, have any items containing ingredients such as nuts been clearly labelled in they cause problems for people with allergies?

If you need safety marshals or lifeguards or the like, have you checked that they are properly trained and instructed and are easily identifiable?

Have you checked that images being used to publicise events are 'royalty free'?

Have speakers given permission to publish or email out copies of presentations?

Health and Safety

Health and Safety are important considerations for IMechE Volunteers working on events of all kinds. You are responsible for ensuring that overall **safety at the event** is maintained so that as far as reasonably practicable, volunteers and anyone attending the event are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

Some of the following is adapted from information published on the Health and Safety Executive website. You may find it useful to look at the site and the other information published there. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/index.htm>

Your duties as an IMechE event organiser

You are responsible for ensuring that overall **safety at the event** is maintained so that as far as reasonably practicable, people setting up, breaking down and attending the event are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

These duties will include:

- having health and safety arrangements in place to control risks
- ensuring co-operation and proper co-ordination of work activities
- providing your fellow volunteers with relevant information on any risks to their health and safety
- ensuring the competence of staff to undertake their role safely
- monitoring health and safety compliance
- reviewing your health and safety arrangements

Working with Venues

In most cases, event venues will have their own risk assessments and health & safety policies, should have insurance in place to cover liabilities arising directly from problems at the venue and should have nominated someone who is responsible for conducting assessments and maintaining a safe environment. For small venues, they should regularly complete an assessment of the kind published here: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary/assets/docs/village-hall.pdf> As an IMechE volunteer, you are not responsible for conducting this evaluation but you should check that your venues have themselves conducted an evaluation of this kind recently. If you have any concerns at all about hazards at a venue, you should ask for a copy of their H&S/Risk evaluations.

Safety - What you need to do

Once physical activity starts at the event site, attention should move away from planning and paperwork to the effective management and monitoring of site operations, as follows:

Management

Have appropriate management systems in place for each phase of the event to make sure health and safety risks are controlled. While the numbers onsite during the public period will be significantly greater, the need for safety management during build up, load-in, breakdown and

load-out is just as important. There may be fewer people, but this is likely to be when the highest-risk work activities are carried out.

Co-ordination

Ensure co-operation and proper co-ordination of all work activities on the site. This does not mean you become responsible for all the individual technical work carried out by third parties. Rather you should make sure you develop a safe overall phased programme of work by taking into account contractor risk assessments and communicating this to all relevant parties.

Information

Provide your fellow volunteers and others, including contractors, with relevant information on any risks to their health and safety identified by your risk assessment/s. Your contractors will need to do the same for their employees.

Do this as part of a general site induction and briefings about individual work activities or tasks. For example, you may need to tell people coming onto site about:

- site hazards and control measures
- buried services such as electric cables
- safe speed limits
- where they can safely park
- first aid, toilets and wash facilities
- emergency arrangements
- weather forecast news
- procedures for using / booking plant

You may also want to provide relevant health and safety information to the public, eg in the form of signage.

Competence

Staff should be competent to undertake their role safely. There should also be an appropriate level of competent supervision, proportionate to the risk, nature of the work and the personnel involved.

Larger events

For larger events, such as a festival, a number of people may share the monitoring role. Whoever has the role should be familiar with the risk assessment findings and control measures, and be able to identify new hazards and assess risks as they arise.

Others with managerial responsibilities can also assist in this monitoring role while undertaking their other duties.

Planning for incidents and emergencies

Your duties as an event organiser

You must have plans in place to respond effectively to health and safety incidents and other emergencies that might occur at an event.

This emergency plan needs to be in proportion to the level of risk presented by event activities and the potential extent and severity of the incident.

What you need to do

- Consider the key risks to the event and those people present.
- Using the resources available to you onsite, develop emergency procedures to be followed by staff and volunteers in an emergency, eg a fire or structural failure.
- Include contingencies to deal with incidents and situations as varied as an entertainment act cancelling at short notice, severe weather, or the unavailability of key staff in your team.
- You will also need to consider your response to more serious emergencies, including major incidents that will require the help of the emergency services and implementation of their regional emergency plans (which may not be specific to the event).
- For all but the smallest events with low risks (or those in fixed venues with established procedures), draw up and discuss your plans with the police, fire and rescue service, ambulance service, emergency planning and, for fixed premises like stadiums and arenas, the venue management.
- The detail and complexity of any discussions should be proportionate to the risks involved. Both organiser and emergency services should be clear about who will do what if there is an emergency or major incident.

Develop an emergency plan

Most event emergency plans should address the same basic requirements, to:

- get people away from immediate danger
- summon and assist emergency services
- handle casualties
- deal with the displaced / non-injured (eg at a festival with camping)
- liaise with the emergency services and other authorities (and, where the situation is serious, hand over responsibility for the incident / emergency)
- protect property

Emergency procedures

Procedures for staff and volunteers to follow in an emergency should include:

- raising the alarm
- informing the public
- onsite emergency response, ie use of fire extinguishers
- summoning the emergency services
- crowd management, including evacuation, where necessary
- evacuation of people with disabilities
- traffic management, including emergency vehicles
- incident control
- liaison with emergency services
- providing first aid and medical assistance

First aid and medical assistance

At most IMechE Region, Centre and Area-organised events, which are usually small, low-risk events, on-site ambulances and/or first aiders are not usually required.

For larger-scale events, we strongly recommend that volunteers and the visiting public are considered in your first aid, medical and ambulance needs assessment. You should balance onsite medical and ambulance provision against existing local NHS and ambulance service provision and capacity.


Organisation


Appoint people to implement your procedures if there is an incident or emergency.

Make sure that all relevant staff members, no matter what their normal working role, understand what they should do in an emergency, eg the location of exits, emergency equipment, how to raise the alarm and from whom they should receive instructions.

Evacuation

Emergencies can develop very rapidly. Make sure that you are equipped to move the audience to a total or relative place of safety without delay. The following will be helpful:

- Plan escape routes and make sure they remain available and unobstructed.
- Consider signs for people unfamiliar with escape routes.
- Light all escape routes sufficiently for people to use them safely in an emergency.
- Make sure emergency lighting complies with the requirements of BS 5266-1 . Use an independent power source, eg a generator, in case the mains electricity supply fails.
- If using floodlighting, lighting towers etc as temporary lighting make sure it does not shine in people's faces along the escape route, making it more difficult for them. As an alternative, 'festoon lighting' along an escape route prevents glare.

- Plan how, where necessary, you will evacuate people to a place of relative safety from where they can proceed to a place of total safety.
- Plan to provide additional assistance to people with a disability, those with limited mobility and children.
- Where children are separated from their parents, as in crèches, play areas etc, make arrangements for their safe evacuation clear so that parents don't try to reach them against the normal direction of escape.
- All doors and gates leading to final exits, as well as site exits themselves, should be available for immediate use at all times. Check they are:
 - unlocked – if security is an issue they should be staffed not locked
 - free from obstructions
 - open outwards in the direction of escape
- For further guidance on escape routes and strategies see the [Guide to safety at sports grounds](#)  and Fire Safety Risk Assessment guides on Small and Medium Places of Assembly, Large Places of Assembly and Open Air Events and Venues.

Show stop

Effective response to an emergency can sometimes mean a rapid and controlled halt to a performance to prevent further risk to the audience or to initiate an evacuation.

'Show stop' (a term used for this procedure) involves:

- identifying the key people involved, in particular who can initiate a show-stop procedure, who will communicate with the performer or participants, and who will communicate with the audience
- deciding how these key people will initiate a show-stop procedure
- having a pre-agreed text for public announcements (consider your lines of communication, eg radios, PA systems)
- briefing the management of performers or participants in advance about the show-stop procedure

This should be documented to ensure good communication between key agencies and adherence to the agreed plan.

After the incident:

- Once the risk has been reduced to a tolerable level, you can consider restarting the performance / event.
- Only restart the performance after consultation with other key agencies on site, eg emergency services.

Transfer of authority for an emergency/major incident

If the emergency services declare an emergency / major incident onsite at an event, all of the event personnel and resources will work under the command of the police. However, it may be that the police declare one part of the event as under their authority in order to respond to the emergency / major incident, but leave other parts of the event under the control of the event organiser.