



NEWSLETTER

CONFERENCE SPECIAL

FSOA's sell-out Spring AGM Conference & Exhibition is best yet

An inspiring discussion about the Hillsborough families' 27-year fight for justice, a thought-provoking terrorism exercise and a light-hearted insight into the world of professional football from Dean Saunders were among the highlights of the FSOA's Spring AGM Conference & Exhibition.

The sell-out event at The Stratford Manor Hotel has been described as the organisation's best ever conference, featuring a packed programme of activities, talks and discussions from industry experts, highlighting a number of relevant issues including the all-too-real risk of terrorism at sports grounds.

Among the speakers was award-winning journalist David Conn, who delivered an inspiring presentation about his experiences covering the Hillsborough inquests, which ultimately vindicated the tragic victims and highlighted numerous police failings and cover-ups. Manchester City Stadium Manager, Mark Ryder, gave an insight into the responsibilities and pressures of the role by reliving his experiences of making the unpopular decision to cancel a Champions League fixture with Borussia Monchengladbach due to torrential flooding in 2016. Guests were given the chance to quiz a panel of experts on a range of issues, including the use of code words for security staff, training for stewards and sanctions for fans taking pyrotechnics into sports grounds, whilst the event also gave organisations in the events industry the chance to showcase their products and services whilst networking with other experts. A minute's silence was held for the victims of the Westminster terror attack.

An evening dinner featuring football legend Dean Saunders as the special guest speaker, reliving humorous tales about his achievements and experiences as a footballer and manager, rounded off the day.

John Newsham, FSOA Business Development Manager, said: "I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who attended our Spring Conference, from all of our wonderful speakers to our exhibitors and guests. The day was packed with interesting content which highlighted the vast and varied roles within sports safety and reinforced the message at the heart of the FSOA that co-ordinated working among all parties is paramount.

"A special thank you goes to main event sponsor, Showsec, and associate sponsor, Dallmeier, for their continued support for our conferences and the FSOA as a whole. We are now making plans for our next conference and exhibition in October, which will mark the milestone 25th anniversary of the FSOA. We look forward to seeing you all there for what promises to be another great event."





A word from FSOA Chair, Sharon Cicco

“**T**his is a very special year for our Association. October 2017 will mark the 25th anniversary of the FSOA, or you could say our Silver jubilee!

Our autumn conference will reflect on this but I want us to look to the future. The role of the safety officer has changed so much over the years. During a recent meeting this topic came up, fuelling more discussion. The safety officer job description of today is, in many cases, a far cry from the more traditional role introduced all those years ago. Many of us have security, facilities and operations, to name a few, also within our remit. Many of us have multi-use stadia and find ourselves managing concerts, festivals, religious events and of course other sports. Our Association must look to reflect these changes. We need to ensure our Association remains current and indicative of the many diversities with our roles. With this in mind, I wish to announce that the MB are seeking to investigate possible avenues of change; a review of membership criteria, the inclusion of other sports and activities, a possible name change and rebranding to name a few. Secondly, The MB wants to review stewarding. Training, as always, is high on the agenda and remains a hot topic of conversation and frustration for the safety officer in equal measure. Registration, Training, Assessment, Qualification, Certification, Funding (or lack of it) - the list goes on. Just like the safety officer, the role and commitment of a steward is changing and we are in danger of creating the ‘Professional Steward’ - a title that very few want. As more and more stadiums are built or redeveloped with higher capacities the demand for good quality stewards continues to increase. Judging by the conversations I have been party to, a shortage of stewards is not isolated to one particular area, this trend is stretching across the country. These topics will be our focus as we move forward, but first let us enjoy 25 years of the Football Safety Officers Association and be proud of all that we have achieved.”

A huge thank you to our Conference sponsors



Results of AGM elections

Members voted unanimously to re-elect Sharon Chicco, of Arsenal FC, as Chair of the FSOA and Mark Miles, of WBA, as Vice Chair.

A warm welcome to our new partner

The FSOA is delighted to announce new Corporate Partner, Regency Security Group LTD.



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When is it the right decision to call off a game?



After a thought-provoking terrorism-related table top exercise, FSOA Business Development Manager, John Newsham, discusses when it is the right time to call off a game.



The role of the safety officer is one that continues to evolve with the ever-changing landscape of sports and stadium safety. But at its core, the job has one real aim: to ensure that the crowds, staff and players stay safe.

Some may think - wrongly, I might add - that it is a job confined to match days. But of course, those who work in it know there is much more to the role than turning up on a Saturday and hoping everything runs smoothly.

Weeks of planning go into every match. Stewards and staff have been thoroughly trained, briefed and prepared for all eventualities. Thorough risk assessments have been made into every possible occurrence, ranging from the anticipation of rowdy fans to poor weather conditions.

Police have been involved in the liaisons and established whether extra officers will be made available due to the possibility of known hooligans expected to turn up to the game. The list goes on...

But what happens if - despite all that planning - an unexpected event occurs? It is your call. Do you call off the game on a whim and risk the wrath of the media, fans and club bosses? Do you send a message out over the PA asking fans to stay calm and run the risk of them doing the opposite? Do you evacuate the ground mid-game and cause hysteria among fans? Or do you keep the game running as normal and hope the rigid procedures you have in place are enough to keep trouble - or worse - at bay?

This couldn't be highlighted more than when it comes to the threat of terrorism at grounds. It is an issue that is discussed extensively at football and sports stadiums and one which sparked a great deal of debate at our conference.

During a table top exercise, run by I.D Resilience, members were presented with an escalating series of terrorism-related scenarios and asked: "What would you do now?"

Our delegates - including safety officers, stadium managers and police officers - were faced with the initial scenario of the raising of the UK Terrorist Threat Level on the day prior to match day before a reported railway explosion possibly targeting football fans, the discovery of a bullet in a stadium toilet, the apparent witnessing of a handgun in the ground and then a shooting incident. All aspects of the scenario were discussed by members from their own personal perspectives, including the levels of resources available to them in real life.

Every club - wherever they are based in the country and whatever their daily budget - has certainly discussed the threat of terrorism as a priority issue so it was fascinating to be part of the discussion to see how each individual perceived the threat level of each scenario and what they deemed to be the 'right' course of action to take at that moment.

Of course, ultimately, there is no 'right' answer. The exercise did, however, highlight the enormous responsibility on the shoulders of safety officers and the necessity that those in the role must make crucial decisions in an instant. It is now important that we work together to continue our discussions and debates into the threat of terrorism to ensure every club is best placed to deal with situations like these just in case the worst ever happened and these hypothetical scenarios became a reality.

Key Learning Points from I.D Resilience following exercise

- 1. Consider a review of response plans to assist in identifying the actions required in response to an increase (or decrease) in the UK Terrorist Threat level.**

The initial phase of Exercise COMPASS enabled delegates to discuss what their likely actions would be in the event of the UK Terrorist Threat Level being raised from the current level of 'SEVERE – An attack is likely', to 'CRITICAL – An attack is expected imminently'. Much of the discussion centred around increased search regimes and bolstering security and stewarding, however, there was a recognition that available resources would be extremely stretched and that such desired resources may well be unavailable. Given that the UK Threat Level has been at 'SEVERE' since 2014, it may well be that any further rise would result in negligible additional requirements at venues, given the current high state. It may be considered prudent for clubs to review their respective response plans and identify a list of options which may be available to them to allow them to respond rapidly in the event of a rise, or for that matter, a decrease in the Threat Level. Such forward planning would provide assurance regarding the proposed response by clubs and stadia to ensure it is realistic and proportionate and the availability of a pre planned response would relieve pressure from Safety Officers at the time of any actual change in Threat Level.
- 2. Understand the differences between 'Police' and 'Non Police' matches and ensure contingency plans reflect the differing responses required on venue and associated roles and responsibilities.**

Exercise COMPASS allowed for some excellent discussion and interaction between delegates in respect of their proposed response to the developing scenario. Much of that discussion surrounded the difference between venues which were policed, with a Police Match Commander available and working in conjunction with the Safety Officer, and those venues which were 'Police free', with no Police resources within the ground. It was clear that at those venues which operate 'Police free' on certain match days, the role of the Safety Officer is clearly different and he / she will have differing responsibilities placed upon them. This issue arose several times during the session and it was clear from delegates' comments that many venue response plans do not differentiate in anticipated response for matches where the venue is operating as 'Police free'. It is recommended that venues review their respective plans to ensure that the difference between anticipated roles and responsibilities for 'Police free' matches is clearly defined.
- 3. Consider current Stadium Control Room arrangements, particularly in respect of who is located there. Review requirements in respect of who would be required when responding to a crisis incident.**

As delegates responded to the evolving scenario, discussion turned to the role of the Stadium Control Room and who would be required to assist in the response to a crisis incident. It was clear from responses that venues differ in respect of who is located within the Control Room, with several delegates stating that there are probably people there because they want to be there as opposed to them being actually being required. Consequently it is suggested that venues should review how their Control Room currently operates, ensuring that those present are valid and more importantly, required. This review should also consider any additional staff who would be required in the event of instigating a response to a crisis incident.
- 4. Review the requirement for pre prepared responses and 'holding statements' to counteract / clarify social media and also pre prepared messaging to assist in communications with supporters via the PA System and messaging to stewards and/ staff.**

The dynamic nature of the scenario placed pressures upon delegates and exposed them to some realisation and understanding of what the response pressures may actually be like in a 'real' incident. One of the key themes from discussion was how clubs and venues would respond to the media in general and social media chatter in particular. Doing and saying nothing may be relevant on occasion, however, generally the requirement to respond may be more beneficial to the management of an incident and ensuring that communication is made via media channels. To this end, it may be beneficial to consider the availability of template responses to assist in the management of the media. These templates would then be available to form the basis of a response with the addition of relevant incident specific content. The availability of such templates would relieve some of the 'thinking time' from Safety Officers and Club Officials during the stressful response period and would display a proactive response. The same principles apply in respect of communications and messaging to supporters and stewards / staff. Again, during Exercise COMPASS, delegates referred to the benefits of having template communications messages available to assist in the response phase of an incident to assist in ensuring the communications were made with the minimum of delay.
- 5. Understand the considerations required to reach the 'tipping point' for abandonment and the short term and long term implications of making such a decision.**

As Exercise COMPASS unfolded there was much discussion on whether the match would be postponed prior to kick off, or in fact abandoned as the details of scenario phases emerged. It was very interesting that different Safety Officers at different venues chose varying approaches, with many of their decisions clearly based around the intimate knowledge they possess regarding their respective stadiums. What clearly arose from the subsequent facilitated discussion, however, was the requirement to fully understand and take cognisance of all impacting factors to reach a decision on where the 'tipping point' would be to take the decision on postponement or abandonment. There was clearly a greater pressure upon Safety Officers at 'Police free' venues as they would be solely responsible for any such decision to be made.
- 6. Consider the use of an action logging and policy logging system to allow all agreed issues to be logged, actioned and responses recorded to provide an auditable incident management trail.**

In support of Key Learning Point 5, the importance of logging was discussed at length, both in respect of incident logging and policy logging. Whilst most venues indicated their use of an incident logging system of sorts, the use of a Policy Log was not clearly recognised. The benefits of the use of such a log to allow Safety Officers to log, record and action during a crisis incident cannot be understated as it will provide an evidential record of their rationale to reach a decision to take a certain course of action, or equally important, not to take a certain course of action. The introduction of such a Policy Log is recommended across all venues. ID Resilience would be available to provide further guidance or information in this respect if required.
- 7. Recognise the potential timeframes for response, both internally and from external partners and ensure that contingency plans are realistic and reflective of these anticipated timescales.**

Exercise COMPASS allowed delegates to gain an understanding that when responding to a crisis incident, it often takes time to raise and action resources to respond. This applies both internally in respect of stewards and staff, to enable sufficient communications and briefing, and also externally, in relation to the response of Police, Fire and Ambulance resources. The nature of Exercise COMPASS brought these issues sharply into focus and it is suggested that response plans are reviewed to ensure that the proposed response is proportionate and realistic taking cognisance of the awareness of possible delays in response.
- 8. Consider the long term Business Continuity, Customer Support, Staff Welfare and Legal implications of a crisis incident occurring at a venue.**

Whilst Exercise COMPASS dealt primarily with the planning and initial response phase to an incident, it was clear that the nature of the incident would require continued ongoing management and that it was not just a short term response. The time constraints on discussion during the session precluded delegates going into great detail on the long term issues, however, matters such as Business Continuity, Customer Support, Staff Welfare, Brand Protection, Reputational Damage, Insurance, Corporate Liability and other Legal Implications were mentioned and given the media coverage that such an incident would encourage, it is recommended that clubs / venues give consideration to their current arrangements and review them as considered necessary.

Conference marks Showsec's new five-year partnership with FSOA

THE MAIN 'goal' was a very familiar one when Showsec kicked off the next leg of their partnership with the Football Safety Officers' Association.

One of the big discussion points throughout the FSOA's Spring Conference was the development of a skilled labour force to meet the required levels of crowd safety and security at football stadiums nationwide.

The Conference marked the start of a new five-year agreement between Showsec and the FSOA as the organisation's Main Sponsor, a partnership notable for initiatives aimed at enhancing public safety at stadiums in the United Kingdom.

Most recently, that has involved the FSOA working closely with the United Kingdom Crowd Management Association on a project to benchmark the current state of the security industry and provide information to help shape its future.

Showsec played a prominent part in that work, as a member of the UKCMA whose Chairperson, Mark Harding, is the company's Managing Director.

"The big challenge for all of us over the next five years is building up a skilled labour force because there are clearly shortfalls right across the board," commented Alan Wallace, Showsec's Regional Manager who addressed the FSOA Conference.

"This has been high on our agenda for some time now and it was a common theme running through the Conference when we had a number of discussions on how we provide the resources necessary to maintain high levels of safety and security.

"The important thing is that this Conference demonstrated that there are major concerns, but there is also a firm commitment to tackling the problem."

There was a ceremonial signing of the new partnership agreement before Wallace addressed the annual Spring Conference, welcoming Sharon Cicco (Arsenal) as Chair and Mark Miles (West Brom) as Vice Chair in the process.

Mr Wallace added: "It was another very productive Conference for Showsec to be a part of as it provides an ideal opportunity to allow members across the country to come together, network and discuss best practice."



Stewarding success at Chesterfield



Concerns over the training and retention of stewards was an issue that featured heavily during the FSOA's Spring Conference.

However the Sports Ground Safety Authority does have some positive news to report with regards to stewarding - more than 70 Chesterfield FC match day stewards have achieved a National Vocational Qualification in spectator control, awarded by City and Guilds.

According to SGSA, the club has new training procedures in place for new stewards, including a mentoring system where all new stewards are allocated a mentor, a senior steward who introduces them to the basics of the role and the responsibilities that come with it.

The mentors complete an electronic feedback document on the progress of the new stewards which is passed on to trainers/assessors to ensure the highest standards are achieved.

The club has also increased its focus on moving and handling awareness, as well as the use of emergency evacuation equipment, enhanced equality and diversity, customer care and conflict management training.

Mobile radio training also trains stewards in the use of correct policy and procedures, as well as the importance of considering confidentiality when transmitting sensitive and private information.

FSOA Business Development Manager, John Newsham, said: "It is great to see Chesterfield FC introducing new high standards for the training of stewards to ensure the best delivery on match days. Congratulations to all newly-qualified stewards."

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