

THROWS SAFETY BULLETIN FOR FACILITY OPERATORS – OCTOBER 2017



Safety cages are required for discus, hammer, club and weight throwing and it is imperative that these meet either International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) or UK Athletics (UKA) specifications.

Whilst accidents remain rare, a tragic fatality and a concerning number of near misses/incidents (summarised below), has led UKA to release this bulletin to all facility operators as a means of reinforcing safety protocols and raising the awareness of the potential dangers of throwing events.

REPORTED THROWS INCIDENTS/NEAR MISSES 2017

Event	Training/ Competition	Summary of incident
Discus	Training	Athlete fatality caused by the collapse of a portable throws cage
Discus	Competition	Official struck on the shin by a discus
Discus	Competition	Official struck in the chest by a discus
Javelin	Training	Two members of public walking across infield area during javelin practice
Javelin	Competition	Javelin narrowly missed a field official the middle of the sector
Hammer	Competition	Hammer escaped over the top of a cage and landed 1m from an Official

Facility Owners and Operators

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) states that employers must ensure the safety of not only their employees but also everyone who uses their facilities. In practical terms this means that you need to ensure that all equipment is in good condition and appropriate for the end user. Facilities should be well managed and maintained at all times, and meet the specifications prescribed by the National Governing Bodies of the sport of athletics (UKA/IAAF).

Safety Cages

For throws events (specifically hammer, discus, club and weight throw), the presence of a UKA/IAAF compliant throws safety cage is critically important. Of equal importance is the ongoing maintenance and inspection of the cage and UKA strongly recommends that Facility Operators instigate the following actions to ensure that cages remain safe and fit for purpose.

UKA/IAAF Compliance

Ensure that all cages are UKA/IAAF approved and compliant with height specifications, namely:

Hammer/Combined Hammer & Discus Safety Cages

- UKA Cages: Cage height minimum of 7m / Gate height minimum 9m (UKA) / 10m (IAAF).

Discus only Safety Cages

- Minimum cage height of 4m.

Cage safety – Facility operator actions

- Ensure that all facility staff have viewed [UKA's short cage safety video](#).
- Download a copy of [UKA's Track Operator handbook](#) and ensure that regular cage and cage netting checks are carried out and documented.

Annual Cage/Netting Inspections

In addition to damage from regular use and implement strikes, outdoor throws safety cages are open to the elements 365 days a year. It is important therefore, to ensure that the both the structural integrity of the cage frame and netting remains intact and retains the properties required to prevent implements deviating from recognised “danger areas” (i.e. the infield sector and its immediate perimeter).



As well as weekly visual cage/netting checks, UKA recommends that all cage frames, netting and associated fixtures are independently inspected on an annual basis by a competent cage installation/maintenance company. Note: For a list of approved companies email: facilities@uka.org.uk

Portable Throws Cage Safety Guidance

UKA recommends that venues utilising portable throwing cages should ensure that their cage is IAAF approved, fit for purpose and installed by competent person/company in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions. (See checklist below).



During the erection of the portable cage it is good practice to have a competent observer (someone not involved in the cage installation), to “cross-check” key stages and verify that the manufacturer’s instructions and safe systems of work have been followed.

PORTABLE THROW CAGE – SAFETY CHECKLIST	Yes/No
Throws cage is IAAF / UKA approved in the relevant throws discipline(s)	
If the cage has been previously used, has a full cage safety inspection been carried out by a competent person/consultant prior to installation?	
A design risk assessment and installation manual have been provided with the cage	
A portable throws cage risk assessment has been carried out and documented by a competent person/consultant	
A safe system of work (SSW) has been created as a result of hazards identified in the risk assessment. Instructions contained within the SSW should be based on the cage manufacturer’s guidance and include arrangements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cage installation, landing areas and the designation of appropriate safety margins • Safe operation and usage of the cage • Robust cage inspections both before and after every usage • Fault reporting • Maintenance measures (in line with manufacturers guidance • Cage dismantling and storage • Any additional control measures mitigating any other areas identified in the risk assessment 	

Throws activity

All implements thrown during athletics training sessions and competition have the potential to be lethal weapons if not properly supervised. As a facility operator it is important that you ensure that you are undertaking all necessary checks as to the competency and standards of those overseeing throws training and competition.

To support you in discharging this responsibility UKA has recently published a Long Throws Safety statement and produced two companion safety bulletins for coaches/officials and event organisers. We recommend that you review all of these documents which are available to download from the UKA website:

- [Coach/Officials Throws Safety bulletin](#)
- [Event organiser Throws Safety bulletin](#)
- [Long Throws Safety Statement](#)
- [UKA Safe Codes of Practice for Track & Field](#)
- [Risk Assessment guidance and templates](#)