

**From Reactive to Proactive Event Safety Management: Are South African Stadia Ready for 2010 Fifa World Cup and Beyond?**

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Prior to democratisation in 1994, the South African sport environment was largely unregulated. As the sport landscape became more controlled, sport entities were challenged to comply with all requirements of newly promulgated Acts. The Safety at Sport and Recreation Events Bill, in particular, holds key implications for sporting events leading up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup (Lei, 2000). The Bill resulted from the South African National Government's mission to ensure that spectators are not unduly exposed to security and/or safety risks when attending sport or recreational events in South Africa. This can be regarded as a proactive step in the planning and preparation of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The national government department responsible for sport and recreation in the country endorsed this view, by stating that it is imperative to avoid situations like the Ellis Park Disaster of April 2001 where 43 spectators died and 150 were injured due to insufficient crowd control (Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2008). Prior to the Ellis Park disaster, event safety was not perceived to be a cause for great concern at sport stadia. In the case of major international events in the past, greater attention has been given to matters of security and crime prevention as opposed to inherent crowd safety, crowd behaviour and crowd management issues.

Matters which arose were treated on an ad hoc basis in a reactive manner. This trend still continues, and current event safety and crowd management measures differ between stadia. They are mostly based on unique circumstances and operational requirements of each facility. A report by Sport and Recreation South Africa (SRSA) on facility standards stated that the Bill requires all sports and recreational governing bodies and their management to have proper safety and security measures in place. Furthermore, these governing bodies need to put "broader sport and recreational interests above their own" (Sport and Recreation South Africa, 2008, p. 72). Focus must be directed at the promotion and maintenance of the safety, security and convenience of those attending events. The Bill proposes a mind shift from a reactive to a proactive approach to event safety. In its current edition, the bill is comprehensive and deals with a large array of issues, relating to event safety and security and will enable event categorisation based on risk, and safety certification of all current and future facilities.

It guides spectator access and addresses ticketing and accreditation, exclusion rights and vehicle control, alcohol and tobacco use, staffing and training and ambush marketing (South Africa, 2004). Its comprehensive nature still remains vague in its practical application in certain areas. As implementation requires new and innovative measures to ensure compliance, some facility operators and owners have expressed concern about the address and approach requirements in addition to a lack of specific implementation guidelines. After the observation of and informal interaction with facility operators, event organisers and facility owners, insufficient knowledge of the Bill and its implications for facility and event owners and managers appeared evident. Events and facilities not adequately poised to meet the challenges of impending legislation may jeopardise future event hosting. Forced compliance without appropriate knowledge and adequate proactive and strategic planning and preparation may also have severe financial implications, i.e. fines and penalties, lost income due to decreased attendance and even the inability to host events.

As non-compliance by sport governing bodies, facility owners and event organisers to the ambitious safety measures in the impending legislation carries a penalty of imprisonment for up to 10 years and/or hefty and will undoubtedly impact on hosting future major sport events in South Africa, it became necessary to evaluate the status of knowledge and compliance of event and facility managers on the requirements set out in the proposed legislation.

The primary aim of this study is to determine the current overall readiness of existing major sport stadia and event owners to comply with the encompassing safety regulations by evaluating standards set for seven specific domains of safety regulations proposed by the Bill: (1) spectator access, (2) ticketing and accreditation, (3) exclusion rights, (4) vehicle control, (5) alcohol and tobacco use, (6) staffing and training and (7) ambush marketing. Standards are evaluated on a 5 point Likert scale reflecting event and facility managers' perceptions on their readiness to implement safety regulations. A secondary aim is to determine facility and event managers' knowledge on the Bill and its implications for future operations at stadia. The research design is

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qualitative and descriptive and a questionnaire will be administered to senior sport facility management staff at four major stadia in the capital city of South Africa (Pretoria) to be used during the 2009 Confederations Cup and the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Preliminary results of this investigation suggest an alarming negativity towards the safety regulations as well as insufficient knowledge on the implications these regulations may hold for future events. Detailed results on the current overall status of compliance with the seven specific domains of safety regulations are not yet available, but it is hypothesized that compliance to standards will vary from average to low.

As current levels of compliance are indicative of future readiness of large stadia to comply with legislation, such a scenario might create problems for bidding and hosting future world class events where event owners prescribe minimum standards of safety. It can provisionally be concluded that compliance to set requirements demands attitudinal and operational changes that support and promote safety, security and the physical well-being of event goers at stadia and facilities throughout South Africa should leaders wish to remain in the arena of international sport. At this stage these required operational standards and attitude change seem to be absent, thereby jeopardizing the hosting of future major sport events. From the results a checklist for managerial sport event and facility training will be developed to institutionalize safety standards at stadia and events beyond 2010 in South African sport.