



COMMUNITY MATTERS

AUTUMN 2025

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the latest issue of our Community Matters newsletter, featuring topical articles for the community sector, including local councils, charities and not-for-profit organisations.

Autumn brings both celebration and challenge: heavy rainfall, darker evenings and seasonal events that require careful planning. In this issue of our newsletter, we focus on the practical steps councils and community leaders can take to stay resilient.

Inside, we share a flood resilience checklist, ways to reduce slips and falls in public spaces, firework and bonfire safety guidance and storage tips to keep seasonal equipment secure. Each article is designed to help you prepare, protect and support your communities with confidence.

If you have any suggestions for future articles, we'd love to hear them. Please email us at UK.Community@ajg.com.

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Slippery Season:

How To Reduce Falls in Public Spaces This Autumn

As the days shorten and damp weather sets in, there is a considerably higher risk of slips and falls in autumn, particularly for older people and children.

But by focusing on a number of key areas, your local council or community organisation can help prevent those all-too-common accidents from occurring.

How to avoid slip-ups: What you can do

Some of the most common reasons for slips and trips tend to be issues with flooring, contamination, poor lighting and maintenance. But all these are easily avoidable. Here are the six key factors contributing to slipping accidents and what you can do to prevent them.

Contamination: Spills, leaks and other contaminating remnants on public area surfaces are critical safety hazards. Swift removal of spills and debris can significantly reduce the chances of accidents, making public spaces safer to walk in.

Top tips: Regularly clear leaves and moss from surfaces and prune the trees along walkways to avoid mishaps.

Cleaning: Cleaning and housekeeping without relevant caution can also lead to slips and falls. It is therefore important to establish a methodical and careful cleaning regime, ensuring no hazards or hindrances are left behind. Adequate storage facilities and rubbish bins can also prevent trips and obstructions.

Top tips: Identify areas for improvement and provide appropriate training to employees. Use clear signage to alert the public to potential hazards like wet floors during cleaning or maintenance.



Flooring: Local authorities should ensure that the flooring in a community venue is properly maintained and designed for the types of activities it supports. If a floor has potential slip hazards, it is important to assess the causes and rectify these as a matter of urgency.

Top tips: Address any issues related to flooring, mats or other safety concerns. Consider whether the floor requires slip-resistant coatings or mats, particularly for frequently used steps or ramps.

Lighting and the environment:

Poor lighting and weather elements like rain, cold and condensation can all increase the risk of falls in external public areas. Appropriate lighting is crucial: if excessive, it may obstruct views, while inadequate lighting can prevent people from seeing hazards. Noise too, when combined with weather elements, could distract people from hazards.

Top tips: Improve lighting in all areas, especially near walkways and entrances. Warning signs can highlight potential risk areas, so make sure to use bright or reflective signage. Check the lighting timers and sensor lights to see if they are working and aligned to the change in daylight hours.

Design and maintenance: Uneven surfaces and easy-to-miss obstructions in walkways are common trip hazards. These can be eliminated by regular maintenance of walkways, lighting and drainage areas.

Top tips: Clearly mark walkways, and make them accessible and sufficiently wide and level. Ensure that stairs are suitably designed with reliable handrails and consistent riser heights.

Human factor: How people act in their work or community spaces can be very unpredictable. Individuals can be moving at speed or wearing unsuitable footwear, which can make situations like spillages or any other hazard even riskier.

Top tips: Ensure that you have appropriate safety barriers, warning signs and visible markings to help prevent incidents. If appropriate, advise visitors to wear slip-free footwear with good grip.

Safety first

As the season changes, small actions can make a big difference. By following these simple recommendations, local councils and community organisations can help to reduce the likelihood of potential accidents and the risks associated with autumn conditions.

Keeping our shared spaces safe reduces liability and helps ensure they remain accessible to everyone.



Storing Equipment Safely: Seasonal Tips for Risk-Free Events

Seasonal outdoor events like fairs, bonfire nights and other local gatherings are great opportunities for local councils to bring people together and foster a community spirit. However, as these events grow in popularity, so too does the responsibility to ensure the safety of everyone involved.

Poor equipment storage — whether it's temporary structures, portable heaters or electrical cables — can pose significant risks, including accidents, injuries and property damage. Even slight negligence may have serious repercussions, underscoring the need for proactive measures to protect both people and property.

Addressing these risk exposures is vital for councils — it is not just an operational concern but a critical matter of public safety and compliance.

Common equipment risks

The risks of poor storage are all too evident. Think of highly combustible gas canisters and portable heaters, which present fire and explosion hazards if stored in warm or crowded areas.

Similarly, extension cables can become trip hazards or lead to short circuits through moisture contact.

Marquees, canopies, signage and other equipment put up for seasonal events are susceptible to collapse in strong winds if not securely anchored. These structures are also at risk of fire or weather damage if stored incorrectly.

Equipment essentials: Best practices for safekeeping

Proper handling and storage of seasonal kit (from tents to electrical equipment to gas, cooking and other fixtures) helps avoid accidents, supports compliance and keeps everyone safe.

To ensure storage safety during seasonal outdoor events, you need to consider the following actions before and after the event:

Before the event

Do's:

- **Anchor firmly:** Properly secure temporary structures to prevent displacement by strong winds.
- **Use weatherproof structures:** Tents and canopies must be able to withstand rain and wind.
- **Tag and test:** Ensure all electrical equipment has undergone Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and is tagged for safety.
- **Plan cable runs:** These need to be laid out in advance to avoid last-moment fixes.

- **Raise electricals:** Elevated platforms will prevent contact with ground moisture.
- **Be gas safe:** Gas cylinders and heating equipment need to be stored in secure, well-ventilated areas away from cooking appliances on level, non-combustible ground.
- **Conduct regular inspections:** Check equipment and storage areas for safety and functionality.
- **Stay organised:** Clearly label equipment for easy identification and arrange storage bins.

Don'ts:

- **Use damaged equipment:** Avoid wet or damaged camping or electrical equipment.
- **Store near flammable areas:** Keep gas cylinders at a safe distance from buildings and combustible materials.
- **Overload storage areas:** Heavy items could fall or crush lighter gear.
- **Stack haphazardly:** Doing so could lead to falls, damage and personal injury.

After the event

Do's:

- **Check for signs of heat:** Ensure all electricals have cooled down completely before packing.
- **Keep tents dry:** Prevent mould by airing them out before folding.
- **Store electricals properly:** Keep items off damp floors and away from high-traffic zones.
- **Label for future use:** Clearly mark equipment for reuse and flag any damage.

Don'ts:

- **Place in direct sunlight:** This will cause equipment to fade and may lead to damage.
- **Pack away wet equipment:** Ensure everything is totally dry before storing. This will prevent rust and mould.
- **Store near heat sources:** Keep equipment away from heaters to prevent damage and fire risk.

Key tips for equipment storage

- Use plastic storage boxes with labels.
- Keep a laminated packing list in each equipment box.
- Take photos of items for future reference.
- Assign a 'storage lead' for every event.
- Follow the Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) guidelines¹.

Final thoughts: Commit to safety

As event organisers are responsible for the health and safety of individuals, it is essential to store equipment with due diligence and anticipate potential risks. By storing your event kit safely, you're not just protecting equipment; you're helping to protect people.

Following these guidelines will help ensure the safety and longevity of equipment during autumn events, addressing safety considerations both before and after the event.

¹"[Slips, Trips and Falls](#)," Health & Safety Executive, accessed 01 Aug 2025.

Community Fireworks and Bonfires: Essential Safety Guidelines

Firework displays on bonfire nights and festivals like Diwali are delightful traditions. Adhering to safety guidelines is crucial to protect lives, prevent injuries, safeguard property and ensure that insurance obligations are met.

Organising a fireworks or bonfire display involves three key stages: planning and preparation, executing the event and implementing post-event safety measures. Below are the effective risk management strategies for each stage.

Preparing for the event: Key guidelines

A well-structured plan is required to effectively manage risks associated with fireworks and bonfire events. Here are the important steps to take.

Purchased from licensed sellers:

Make sure you buy fireworks with a UK Conformity Assessed (UKCA) tag from registered or licensed in-store and online retailers.

Choose a suitable location:

The designated area for the fireworks display and bonfires should be spacious. Keeping a safe distance between the fireworks display area, the bonfire and the spectators will help to prevent accidents. Check for overhead obstructions (e.g., power lines) and wind directions on the event night to ensure a safe fireworks display. The site should be far from any flammable materials.

Firework control zones (FCZs): Latest developments

In parts of the UK, local councils are looking to expand FCZs to ensure safe firework displays. Edinburgh City Council, for example, launched a public consultation in March 2025 to gather community feedback on proposed FCZs for bonfire nights¹.

Obtain necessary permissions:

Local council guidelines may vary in different UK regions. You need to ensure full compliance with local regulations; for example, fireworks are usually not allowed between 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. However, there are exceptions for certain celebrations like Diwali, Bonfire Night, New Year's Eve and Chinese New Year celebrations.

Risk management and emergency planning:

Be sure to assign a person responsible for managing safety and notifying emergency services. Prepare first aid kits, fire extinguishers and water or sand to douse the fire. Implement effective crowd control measures and maintain safe distances throughout the event. Contact your insurers to find out if your policy covers bonfires or fireworks displays.

Conduct thorough training for your team:

All volunteers and employees must undergo proper health and safety training. Document this and conduct a written risk assessment for your event beforehand. Consulting with insurers will help you to secure volunteer insurance.

Secure premises: Adopt Martyn's

Law recommendations:

As part of your event's security planning, it's important to consider the requirements of Martyn's Law. Officially known as the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, the legislation requires UK venues and event organisers to assess terrorism risks and implement necessary safety measures.

- If your event is held at a publicly accessible location for 200 to 799 people, you need to complete free terrorism awareness training, a basic risk assessment and prepare a simple emergency response plan.
- For events where you're expecting 800 people or more, a more detailed risk assessment is needed, as well as a formal security plan and staff training with live drills.
- Communities can encourage volunteers to access free government training on terrorism awareness. Volunteers should also engage in drills or structured training to enhance their skills in managing larger events (those for over 800 attendees).

Firework displays: Event night best practices

Coordination and proactive safety measures are essential to ensuring a safe and responsible celebration. Here are the key guidelines to implement:

Rechecking designated sites:

Staff should mark and secure firework zones. Ensure all members of the public are kept at least 25 metres from the display area. There should be safety fencing and a ratio of at least one steward for every 250 spectators.

¹"[Firework Control Zones Consultation](#)." Edinburgh, 20 Mar 2025.

Understanding different firework categories

Category 1: Suitable for indoor use, such as party poppers and indoor fireworks. Low hazard and noise level.

Category 2: Designed for outdoor use in confined areas, like garden fireworks. Low hazard and noise level.

Category 3: Intended for large open spaces, such as public firework displays. Medium hazard and high noise level.

Category 4: For professional use only. These fireworks are not available to the public and require specialist handling. High hazard and extremely high noise level.

Provided you strictly follow the manufacturer's safety instructions, any person can set off Category 1, 2 or 3 fireworks. However, a qualified professional operator is required for Category 4 fireworks.



Managing crowds and evacuations:

Volunteers should proactively prevent overcrowding and keep spectators outside the safety zone. Barriers and signage will help guide and protect attendees. Make sure your volunteers can be easily identified, so provide fluorescent bibs or jackets.

Evacuation procedures should be known to all volunteers and spectators. Pre-event drills can help avoid unnecessary incidents.

Lighting and supervising fireworks:

Assign a specialist person to light the bonfire, wearing low-flammable clothing. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and light fireworks one at a time. Do not use petrol, paraffin or other accelerants to start bonfires. Never attempt to relight any that fail to go off.

Volunteers must actively monitor the bonfire and firework area to ensure that all attendees remain at a safe distance throughout the event.

They also should be vigilant about overhead hazards, such as power lines or tree branches, ensuring the site is free from obstructions.

Post-event: Crucial inspection checklists

A thorough inspection of the display and storage areas following a fire or bonfire is mandatory. Community members should focus on:

- Extinguishing fires completely with water or sand.

- Collecting and disposing of spent fireworks and bonfire debris at their designated places, preferably on the same day.
- Ensuring that there are no potential fire hazards in the designated area and that all embers are cold and cannot reignite
- Appointing an official to inspect the event area in daylight to address any residual risks.
- Documenting any incidents or near misses, as these will be helpful in future event planning to inform volunteers, staff and community leaders.

Autumn Flood Resilience Checklist for Local Councils and Communities

The weather pattern in the UK has changed over the last few years. According to a State of the UK Climate Report, heatwaves and periods of flood or drought have become more frequent and intense¹.

In January 2025 alone, nearly 1,600 properties in the UK were flooded², with 4.6 million properties at risk of flooding from surface water. The number has increased by approximately 44% since the 2023-2024 National Flood Risk assessment, and we can further expect to see a 30% jump in the next 15 years³.

Looking ahead to the remainder of 2025 and into 2026, floods and storms could become more frequent, making it crucial for local councils and communities to explore flood resilience measures.

How you can help protect against floods

- Install flood barriers and use water-resistant building materials for refurbishments.
- Ensure regular maintenance, such as clearing drains and checking flood defences.
- Outdoor furniture, storage units and equipment need to be anchored to protect them from strong winds. Move equipment indoors during flood alerts.
- Protect indoor equipment by keeping key machinery elevated and using waterproof covers for high-value electronics.
- Keep critical documents and backups off-site or in cloud storage.
- Ensure that staff and volunteers are updated on flood protocols. Emergency alert systems like mobile notifications need to be tested regularly.



- Review your flood response plan frequently and involve community stakeholders in identifying areas for improvement.

Practical flood resilience tips: Safeguard local facilities

If your premises have been flooded, take the following precautions before you undertake damage assessment.

- Ensure that the building has been declared safe to enter by the authorities.
- Turn off the electricity at the mains before entering.
- Equip staff with protective gear to avoid contact with contaminated water.

- Once inside the building, document the damage with photographs/videos.
- Check the walls, floors and ceilings for any signs of structural damage.
- Contact professional cleaners for restoration services, especially if the premises serve as designated shelters.

Encourage volunteer sign-up for emergency response

A strong community response during emergencies like storms and floods can significantly help relief efforts. Enlisting the help of volunteers can be critical in helping and speeding up aid efforts.

¹"State of the UK Climate in 2024," Royal Meteorological Society, 13 Jul 2025.

²"More Than 78,000 Properties Protected by Environment Agency During This Month's Flooding," GOV.UK, updated 14 Jan 2025.

³"National Assessment of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk in England 2024," GOV.UK, updated 22 Jan 2025.

Councils and communities can achieve this by encouraging people to sign up for relief operations by posting information on their websites, local newsletters, community noticeboards and social media. To increase volunteer sign-ups, incentives like certificates or training credits may also be offered. Partnering with local resilience forums or emergency services for awareness drives can also help people understand how they can play a crucial role in saving lives during a crisis event.

Be sure to prepare all community members by offering training sessions in basic first aid, evacuation procedures and crisis communication.

Building future resilience: Check your insurance coverage

In the event of a flood, it is vital to inform your insurer or insurance broker as soon as possible. Take photo or video documentation, as this will assist and expedite the claims process. You can also maintain an updated inventory of equipment and property with receipts.

While inspecting damage, create a detailed inventory of losses with estimated values. Do not throw away damaged items before the claims assessor inspects them.

Having a flood continuity plan in place is vital for organisations to recover quickly from unexpected flooding or storm damage. Appropriate insurance coverage can help organisations minimise damage and bounce back stronger.

Most importantly, ensure that insurance policies are updated for flood-specific coverage and that risk assessments are carried out regularly.

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To find out more, please contact us.

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