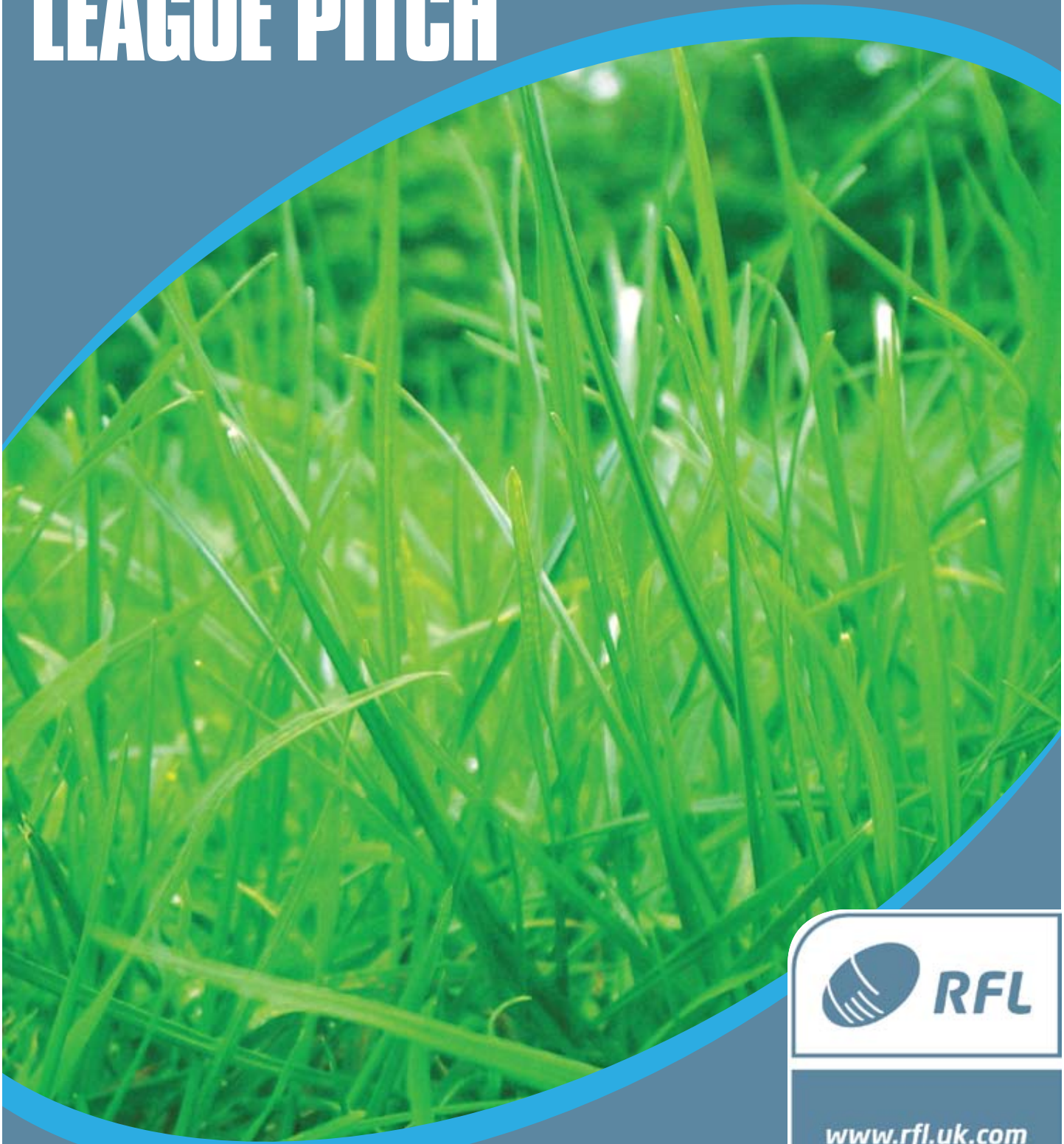
THE RUGBY FOOTBALL LEAGUE & THE INSTITUTE OF GROUNDSMANSHIP

ANNUAL PREPARATION & MAINTENANCE OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE PITCH



RFL

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RUGBY LEAGUE TURF CARE MANAGERS

The Turf Care Manager is an essential element of the Sporting and Recreational industry, he or she has the onerous, but rewarding role of preparing and maintaining the stage on which so many sporting men and women depend for their performance and enjoyment.

It is therefore equally essential that the Turf Care Manager fully appreciates their responsibility in producing a safe and consistent surface. This will only be achieved by having the knowledge and expertise found in the science of turf culture.

The RFL run a range of Turf Care courses in partnership with the Institute of Groundsmanship. The courses on offer include a Foundation level which is for complete beginners through to an Advanced Level. Please contact the RFL for more information and to book a course - see page 14.

Timing is essential. Even if you know what to do, this knowledge will be useless if the timing is wrong. You must do each task:

- In the right sequence
- At the right time
- In the right weather conditions
- With a full understanding of the effect you want to achieve.

A Note on Health & Safety

Many Turf Care Managers who care for rugby grounds are selfsufficient in maintaining and producing playing surfaces, perhaps with the guidance of a club or grounds Chairman.

In large organisations, you may have to report to a manager or supervisor. On every occasion the employer and / or club is ultimately responsible for the health and safety of its workers. You will find Risk Assessment information in Appendix A.

MAINTENANCE SUMMARY FOR RUGBY LEAGUE PITCHES

Spring
(April / May)

- Overseed the pitch with 100% ryegrass seed (Approx 6 x 20kg bags).
- Mark out the pitch. It is important that the pitch is “Squared up” and the lines are straight and clear.
- Brush or drag mat as often as is necessary.
- Spike as often as possible, to 150-200mm.
- Roll when conditions allow; be careful with the weight of the roller and aerate after rolling.
- Cut to keep the grass an even length, increasing cuts as the grass starts to grow.
- Fertilise in order to give the grass a boost in the spring.

Summer
(June / July / August / September)

- Cut the grass minimum twice a week as necessary, this will keep the sward thick and encourage thickening of the grass sward.
- Apply an application of selective weed killer at an appropriate time, following the manufacturer’s recommendations and Health and Safety Legislation.
- Aerate to prevent the surface capping and encourage deep rooting.
- Apply an application of summer fertiliser.
- Scarify and remove debris if required.
- Irrigate as and when required (where possible).

Figure 1 Grass growth

Figure 2 Weeds

Autumn
(October / November)

- Work should never be carried out during inclement weather, when the site is water logged or the soil is over compacted.
- Mow the pitch. This should be done once a week until the grass becomes dormant; this will help to keep the sward thick. The pitch is either boxed off or gang mowed depending on the standard of the pitch. Height of cut should be 25 – 50mm.
- Roll, if necessary, to produce a flat surface; great care must be taken as rolling with too heavy a roller or rolling in poor conditions can damage the soil structure, and cause compaction. The weight of a normal 36-inch box mower is sufficient in most cases.
- Aerate as often as possible, but only when conditions allow. Aerates fortnightly once to relieve compaction and enhance root growth. Any type of spiker, is acceptable as long as a depth of 150-200mm is being achieved (this will depend on soil conditions).
- Brush as often as possible in order to keep air circulating around the base of the grass sward, and prevent any attack of fungal disease.
- Harrow once or twice a week in order to maintain a surface.
- Verti cut or scarify the pitch if required and remove debris.
- Apply an application of autumn fertiliser if a programme of slow release has not been used.
- Re-mark the pitch prior to each match.
- After each match, divot and tread the divots back into position. Repair the worn areas as required.

End of Season Renovation
(November)

- The purpose of end of season renovation is to restore appropriate levels and re-establish the grass coverage.
- Establish levels in worn areas; break up pans, which will have formed during the playing season. If required import topsoil, checking the quality of the top soil, e.g. soil texture.
- Relieve compaction over all the pitch; deep spiking, vertical aeration with heave can do this.
- Top-dress the pitch. The type of topdressing will depend on the existing soil type, the soil type desired, and the finance available.
- Over seed the pitch with greater attention to bare areas. Overseed with a 100 per cent perennial rye grass mixture at a rate of 35gm2, using three or four cultivars to increase sward density.

• Work in the top dressing by using a drag brush or mat to level the surface.

• Apply an application of fertiliser based on a soil test, to make nutrient available to the young grass plant.

• Irrigate if required and possible.

Winter
(December / January / February)

• If required and possible due to ground conditions cut the grass in order to keep it at a manageable and healthy length.

• Aerate as often as possible, to aid drainage, to a depth of 150-200mm.

• Harrow once or twice a week in order to maintain a surface.

• Brush to remove dew, and lower the risk of fungal attack.

• If required, top dress with sand, with particular attention to worn areas.

• Check the type of sand used, e.g. pH and particle size/shape.

• Mark out, as and when required. If conditions are poor you may need to change the method of marking out to dry line marking.

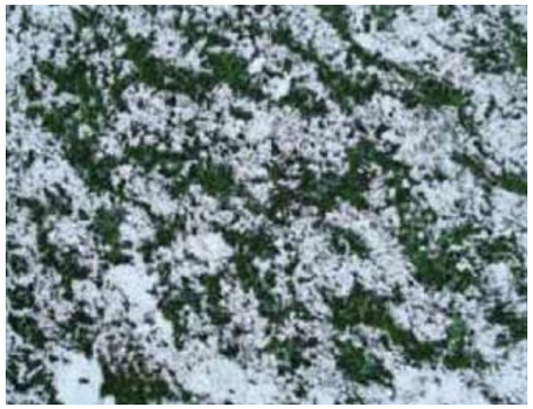

Figure 3 Winter conditions

Figure 4 Top dressing a pitch

SETTING & MARKING OUT: PITCH SIZES

For adult games the dimensions should be as near the preferred size as possible (please see the RFL Pitch Size Guidance available on the RFL Facilities Trust website).

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Accuracy is essential when setting out sports pitches to ensure all longitudinal and transverse lines are parallel and at right angles to one another, and in so being form squares or rectangles rather than parallelograms.

The following is a method (shown on next page) whereby the required accuracy can be attained with relative ease. This method is known as the “3:4:5” method and can be used to obtain any dimension required in the realm of sport facility provision.

Figure 5
Line markings

SETTING & MARKING OUT: SEQUENCE FOR SETTING OUT

Constructing a right angle:

Equipment required

- 120m string (or other) line.
- 1 x 100m tape measure.
- 1 x 50m tape measure
- 6 metal (1cm gauge) pegs, 300mm long.
- Line marking machine.
- Marking compound.

A full range of materials are available to provide a suitable form for any of the surfaces used for sport. Lime (hydrated lime), and Creosote are NOT to be used.

1.

Place a taut line to produce the base line and mark the corner positions **A** and **B**.

2.

From the corner peg **A**, extend a tape for 30 feet to point **X**.

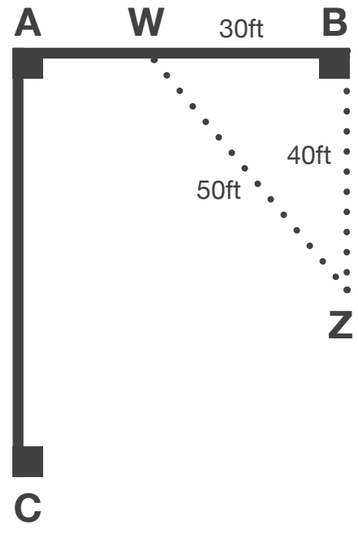
Extend a tape 40 feet from **A** to **Y**.

The distance from **Y** to **X** must be 50 feet, which will give a right angle at **A**.

3.

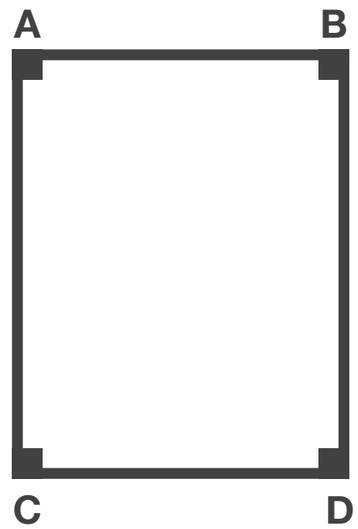
Extend the line **A** to **Y** for a length of 90 - 120m to identify the 3rd corner peg of the pitch at point **C**.

4.



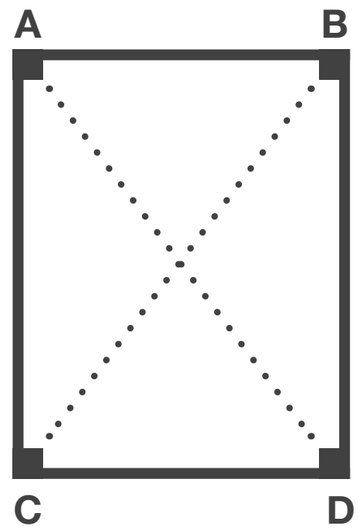
Carry out the same procedure as in step 2 above at **Z** the corner **B** to produce a right angle at the other end of the pitch.

5.



Extend line **B** to **Z** to the required length to produce the 4th corner peg at point **D**. A complete rectangle is now made for the pitch.

6.



The accuracy can be checked by measuring the diagonals **A** to **D** and **B** to **C**.

SETTING OUT METHODOLOGY

Playing Field

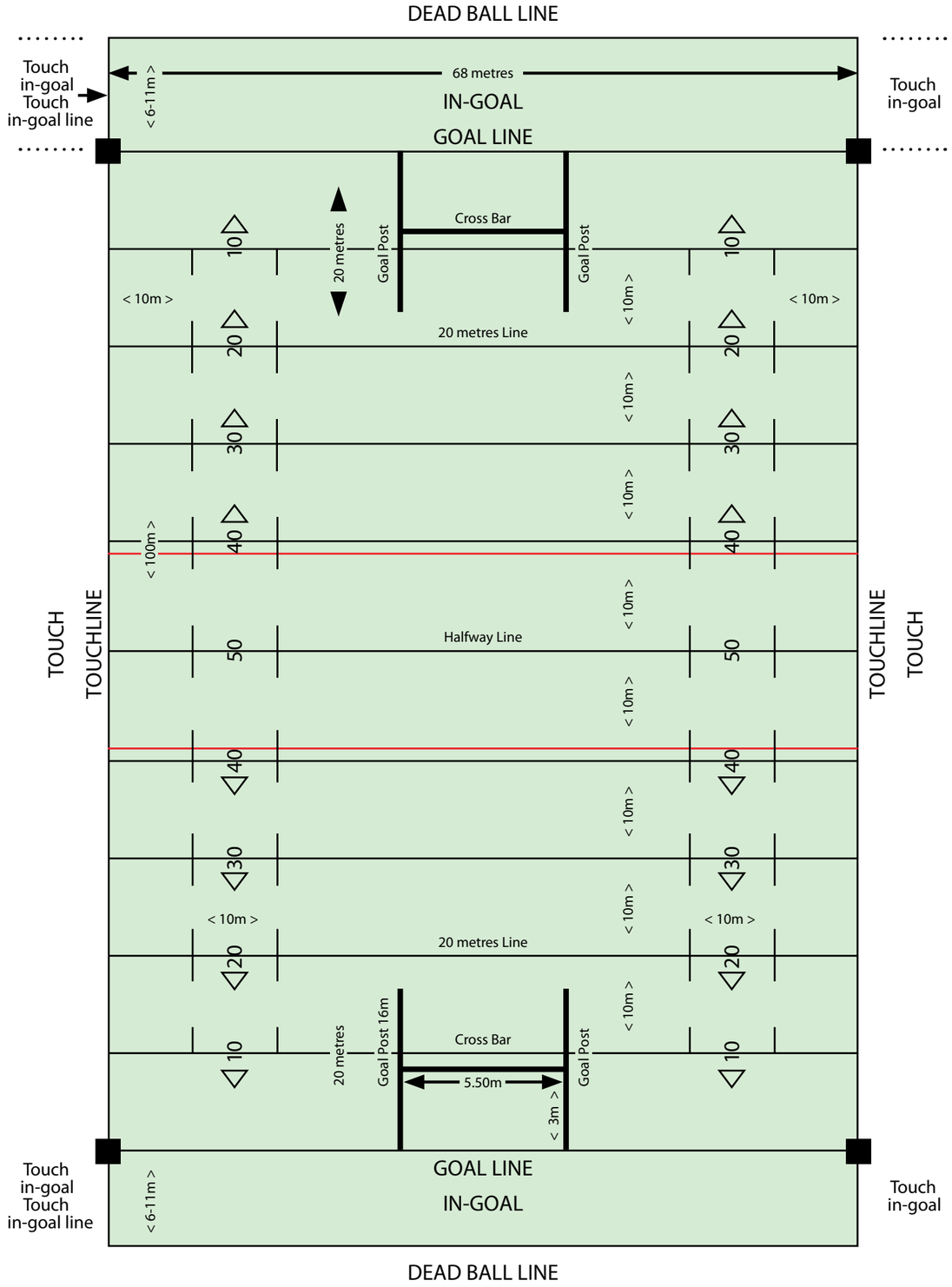
The plan and markings thereon and the notes relating thereto are part of those laws.

- Minimum distance from goal line to goal line 88m
- Maximum distance from goal line to goal line 100m
- Minimum pitch width 55m
- Maximum pitch width 68m
- Minimum in-goal area 6m
- Maximum in-goal area 11m
- Recommended in-goal area 8m

Pitch Markings

- The home Club must ensure that pitch markings are visible and correctly laid-out.
- Line markings should be no less than 10cm in width and white in colour (except for the red line adjacent to the 40m line on the half way line side).
- The following lines are required - 10m, 20m, 30m, 40m, 50m, goal line, dead ball line and touch line.
- Where a pitch is less than 100m from goal line to goal line the 10m, 20m and 30m lines should be measured accurately from the goal line and the 40m line should be measured accurately from the half way line. The distance between the 30m and 40m lines will therefore not be 10m and this should be highlighted by marking the 30m line in a broken rather than solid line.
- 10m & 20m scrum lines should be marked.
- Metre markers should be painted on the pitch on the 10m, 20m, 30m, 40m and half way lines.
- Pitch markings for other sports should be greened out.
- Technical area should be marked out so as to give at least 3 metres clearance from the touch line, although 2 metres is acceptable, as long as no items are placed on the floor within 3 metres.

Figure 6 Great pitch, great performance



APPENDIX A: RISK ASSESSMENTS - 1
PEDESTRIAN CYLINDER MOWER OPERATION

Significant Hazards	Risk Assessment			
	Insignificant	Low	Medium	High
Scissor Action Cylinder Blade				X
Hot Engine Parts			X	
Vibration			X	
Noise			X	
Infection		X		
Manual Handling			X	
Fire		X		

Reference:
- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992.
- The Manual Handling Regulations 1992.
- Noise at Work Regulations 1989.
- Safe Method of Operation No.23.

Control Measures:
Planning
All operations must be carried out as prescribed in the manufacturer's manual and the Safe Method of Operation. No. 23 and must be subject to local risk assessment, in writing if necessary, before operations commence. All known site hazards e.g. terrain (the presence of slopes or uneven ground) and assessed hazards e.g. the likelihood of deleterious material (including animal excreta) or areas of high public occupation, must be made known to the operatives concerned.

Operational
Operatives should ensure that they are aware of terrain conditions e.g. stony or dusty and wear the appropriate PPE e.g. gearing protection. Operatives must also be alert and mindful of their requirement to protect both themselves and others (including members of the public) from the hazards of the operation, especially children and those who may be deaf or blind. ***Never*** allow any part of the body to come into contact with cutting edges (be aware that latent energy in the drive system can cause rotation of the cylinders especially when blockages are released.

When operating on the highway verges drivers must hold an appropriate licence and always conform to the Highway Code. Always carry out extreme care when loading or unloading the machine on or off a trailer. Always use a winch cable where fitted or a minimum of two man lifting.

Supervision
Supervisors must ensure that the operation is only carried out by competent persons, and that the machinery is in good order and has suitable and effective guards where fitted.

Training
All operators must be fully trained before carrying out any work with this type of machine.

APPENDIX A: RISK ASSESSMENTS - 2
ERECTION AND DISMANTLING OF GOAL POSTS

Significant Hazards	Risk Assessment			
	Insignificant	Low	Medium	High
Manual Handling			X	
Infection		X		

Reference:
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Work Place Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1992.
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992.
- Safe Method of Operation No 44.

Control Measure:
Planning
Before carrying out any work on any site a Local Site Risk Assessment Must be carried out in writing if required. The assessment must identify technical risks, risks to staff and risks to public safety. All evaluations must take account of environmental conditions. All overhead services must be identified in advance of operations and appropriate action taken. Provision for first aid should be available.

Operational
All persons engaged in this work must wear appropriate protective clothing. Public control must be exercised by the person in control in relation to the work being carried out. Should members of the public enter the danger zone then all work must cease until they leave. All techniques and procedures used during the operations will, as far as is reasonably practical follow the codes of practice, guidelines and safe methods defined in the Safe Methods of Operation unless agreed with the Safety Adviser.

Supervision
Supervisors must ensure that methods of operation are safe and ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken to maintain public safety and any additional hazards, such as over-head services, use of ladders and mobile work platforms are made known to the work force, with the aid of an on-site Risk Assessment.

Training
All persons carrying out the operation must have undertaken appropriate training and be given applicable site information and instruction.

The RFL may be able to provide information for your club on companies that carry out the erection and dismantling of goal posts. Please contact your Service Area Coordinator.

APPENDIX A: RISK ASSESSMENTS - 3
SPORTS MARKING OPERATIONS

Significant Hazards	Risk Assessment			
	Insignificant	Low	Medium	High
Chemical Contamination			X	
Infection (Animal Excreta)		X		
Injury from Animals (Bites)		X		

Reference:
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Manual Handling Regulations 1992.
- Safe Method of Operation No. 5.67.
- Work Place.(Health Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992.

Control Measure:
Planning
Where marking machines are used provisions for, loading and unloading (transport) must be assessed. The carriage of marking compound either dry or liquid must be considered.

Operational
All persons engaged in this operation must be equipped with suitable protective clothing e.g. gloves and boots. Spare or waste material must not be poured onto grass surfaces or down drains.

Supervision
Supervisors must ensure that equipment is kept in a well-maintained order, and that all operators and users of marking compounds maintain a good personal hygiene practice i.e. washing hands before eating etc.

Training
All persons carrying out this work must be suitably trained.

FURTHER HELP AND INFORMATION

Contact:
RFL Facilities Manager
Carol Doran
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Visit:
The RFL Facilities Trust
www.rflfacilitiestrust.co.uk

The Institute of Groundsmanship
www.iog.org

Sport England
www.sportengland.org

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