



NOTES ON TOURING HEALTH & SAFETY

A few issues have been raised regarding health & safety matters on tours – usually abroad – but the principles apply to any performances done away from the main place of work.

As with all health & safety & welfare matters, the first step is a Risk Assessment (RA). The employer has a responsibility to carry out a Risk Assessment of a tour and the individual places where performances are to be held. The safety rep should be asking for a copy of such a risk assessment well in advance of the tour to give an opportunity to seek advice from the MU on its adequacy. It may be worth sending out a letter in advance of any tour to the touring company requesting to see the RA (possibly along with other contractual considerations) either by officers or safety reps. We are aware a number of employers do routinely send out advance people to carry out such RAs and to look at other issues for the performances.

The RA should be looking at in-venue matters (covering all the same issues as RAs at the home venue) but also generic touring issues such as travel and rest arrangements; provision of food and liquids; security; pollution; infection and other medical risks; temperature and humidity.

Some of these issues may require more detailed consideration where risks are higher. Security issues, for example, can vary greatly from place to place, both for individuals and the group as a whole. Pollution requires detailed information on the nature of the pollution and where masks, for example, are provided whether they are adequate for the specific pollution risk to which the musician is being exposed. These issues can be very challenging but the result of reactions to exposure can be severe.

A problem also arises if a player (or players) are unwell or injured in some way. If there is no doctor travelling with the group then there needs to be access to a doctor with specialist knowledge of musicians and in whom all parties have trust & confidence. This would generally be best done by arranging, before setting out, that there is a doctor contact available to give advice at all times by phone. This is not to deny there may be excellent medical advice available locally but finding it - and all parties having confidence in it - can present problems, particularly when swift responses are important. In some circumstances this may require getting the retained advisor to talk to local medical practitioners about the particular case.

The employer has the responsibility of eliminating or reducing risk as far as “reasonably” possible and providing suitable protection. In this they must seek competent advice. If we can get early sight of any RAs for tours we can assist in ensuring all the issues are covered. Where there is initially no RA ensuring one is provided must be a priority before the tour starts.

Roger Sutton

Health & Safety Specialist/Consultant