**PYROTECHNICS AND FOOTBALL – BACKGROUND FACTS**

**Pyrotechnics and football – what we know**

**Pyrotechnics are illegal at football grounds**

Being in possession of a pyrotechnic device at a football match, or attempting to bring a pyrotechnic device into a football stadium, is a criminal offence under the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act 1985. Any person committing such an offence faces arrest and can expect the Court to make a Football Banning Order.

**The 2012/13 season saw a record number arrested for pyrotechnics**

There were 71 arrests for ‘Possession of a Firework / Flare at a Sporting Event’. This was an increase of 154% on arrests recorded for the 2011/12 season (28). These arrests have occurred at more matches in the Premier League (26) and Championship (21) than in League 1 and League 2 which saw less than five arrests each.

**People are getting jailed and banned**

* In November 2013 a Manchester United fan that set off a smoke bomb during their clash with West Bromwich Albion - Sir Alex Ferguson's last game in charge – was given a two month jail term (suspended for 12 months) and banned from any football grounds for three years.
* In February 2013 two Chelsea fans were jailed for 28 days and given six year football banning orders for taking smoke bombs into the Liberty Stadium for a match versus Swansea City. Their appeal for the sentence was thrown out.
* In January 2013 an 18 year old Exeter City fan was jailed for two months and given a six year banning order for attempting to take a smoke bomb into Torquay United v Exeter City.
* In August 2012 an Oxford United fan was jailed for two months and given a six year banning order for taking a smoke bomb into Home Park for a match versus Plymouth Argyle.

**Incidents nearly always involved the away supporters**

Of the 172 reported pyrotechnic incidents in the 2012/13 season, 164 were committed by away supporters.

**They are used by younger fans**

The average age of supporters arrested for pyrotechnic use is 20. Little disorder was reported as a direct result of their use.

**What do football clubs do to counter the threat of pyrotechnics?**

**They gather intelligence**

Prior to matches research is undertaken to find relevant intelligence about the visiting Club and the behaviour of their supporters with the Police, with the visiting club’s safety officer and by studying the reports collated on the Football Safety Officers Association website. When it is indicated that a threat exists in relation to smoke bombs, flares or fireworks mitigation is deployed.

**How do they mitigate at grounds?**

* Pyrotechnic detection dogs are used as a visible deterrent and detect pyrotechnic devices both at points of entry and on the concourses. Their use is advertised to fans. Amnesty bins for those carrying pyros are often used by clubs.
* Stewards and Security Officers are briefed on the intelligence relating to the visiting fans and how to react in the event of the illegal ignition of pyrotechnics.
* Thorough searching of people entering the stadium is undertaken by security officers under the supervision of police.

**What safety procedures to clubs have in place?**

* As pyrotechnics can vary in terms of manufacturer, size, duration, behaviour, effects and heat output, clubs treat each item as a ‘worst case scenario’.
* After immediately informing the Stadium Control Room, stewards will monitor the situation from a safe distance.
* If practicable they will ensure that spectators are kept away from the source and allow room for the Fire Safety Stewards to gain access to the area.
* Only trained Fire Safety Stewards will approach and deal with the pyrotechnic situation, with associated Security Steward support as required.
* They will gather evidence of those responsible for the pyrotechnic activations and request CCTV as appropriate.

**Recent examples of injuries caused by pyrotechnics at English football grounds**

* Leeds United v Shrewsbury Town, 11 August 2012 – two supporters were injured, one requiring hospital treatment, when an industrial firework was ignited and thrown in the away supporters’ toilet.
* Coventry City v Walsall, 8 December 2012 - a flare was discharged by the Walsall supporters. A steward placed his foot on the device to prevent further smoke escaping, however the sole of his shoe melted causing injury.
* Leicester City v Sheffield Wednesday, 9 March 2013 - a female supporter received treatment for burns to her leg from one of the smoke bombs thrown between supporters.
* Bolton Wanderers v Huddersfield Town, 2 April 2013 - Bolton supporters ignited a flare and an 18 year old youth was treated for burns picking it up.
* West Bromwich Albion v Newcastle United, 20 April 2013 – fans were treated for shrapnel wounds following the setting off of thunder flashes. Debris passed through jeans and caused cuts to legs.
* Wigan Athletic v Aston Villa, May 2013 - a 15-year-old boy suffered lung damage from a smoke bomb thrown during the game. The boy needed hospital treatment, while two women aged 22 and 24, also required attention for the effects of the device.
* Liverpool v Everton, May 2013 – an eight year Everton fan was hit by a smoke bomb thrown by fans in the away end. He was treated for a burn on his neck on his first visit to a Merseyside derby.
* Aston Villa v Tottenham Hotspur on 20 October 2013 - an assistant referee was struck by a lit smoke canister thrown from the stand.