



GUIDANCE ON PITCH INSPECTIONS

The FA recommended the following procedure for the guidance of Clubs and Referees in determining the suitability of grounds in adverse weather conditions

Each Club must take every precaution to ensure that its ground is in a fit playing condition.

When the regional weather conditions are known to be extreme (e.g. prolonged severe frost, clear water logging or heavy snow) then the game can be postponed at the discretion of the League following consultation with the appropriate League Secretary / Officer, League Rules will apply; this is not an issue for the match day Referee. Should a Competition decide to agree to an early postponement under such circumstances there will be no requirement for a pitch inspection.

In all other circumstances and subject to the time and travelling distance, the match Referee should be called in to make a decision. In the event of the match Referee being unable to carry out the inspection, the Home Club **must** select an alternative Referee listed on the North West Combined Counties Referees Supply League Pool (All Divisions).

Should it not be possible to identify an appropriate Match Official, the Appointing Authority will determine a suitable person to carry out the inspection.

If a specific League Rule exists where the timing of a pitch inspection is stated, this will apply but is a League issue only.

North West Counties League: Pitch inspections for Saturday fixtures generally between 10am and 11am, mid-week fixtures between 3pm and 4pm. However, Clubs should make every effort regarding the fitness of the pitch and should not hastily postpone a match. In such circumstances the home Club Secretary should inform their opponents that a pitch inspection is to take place.

Prior to reaching a decision the Referee who is making the inspection must:

- 1: Consult with the match Referee prior to the inspection
- 2: Consult with the match Referee during / after the inspection to mutually agree on a decision prior to notifying the Home Club Secretary or Club Chairman and the appropriate League Secretary (or Chairman if the Secretary is not available).

Prior to reaching a decision the Referee who is making the inspection should consider the following:

- 1: Whether or not the ground (playing area) is dangerous (e.g. ice / frost)
- 2: Whether or not that the spectator standing areas are dangerous (e.g. ice / frost)

3: Whether or not conditions are or could turn farcical

4: The views of the Home Club Groundsman in terms of local knowledge and draining capabilities in the event of standing water

5: The existing condition of the playing surface in conjunction with the prevailing weather conditions as previously confirmed with the local weather authority

The inspecting Referee should be seen to be active! Adhere to deadlines, keep all informed; especially the away Team Manager if he is on route and can be contactable (home club will have the Secretary's mobile number); or if the away Club are in a hotel locally. If they are within a reasonable time/distance from the ground it is only courtesy that the Referee awaits their arrival.

Inspect thoroughly! A professional approach **must be adopted** when carrying out an inspection. It is not acceptable for a Referee just to take a cursory look at the field of play in normal dress (i.e. Suit / Blazer etc.). Sports kit should be worn, along with appropriate footwear (i.e. football boots). All areas of the pitch should be inspected. A ball should be used to determine whether the surface is playable (for movement and bounce), if appropriate, playing staff may be able to assist you in this practical session.

Fog creates its' own problems. A Referee should use perspectives from ground level and the back of a stand – check forecast (remember that there is a responsibility to paying spectators)

When dealing with such elements as frost or ice – remember that the highest temperature of the day is usually around mid-day. Get a forecast if necessary of the projected temperature for the time when the match is due to conclude

Consider:

The manpower available to the Home Club to carry out any necessary work to make the ground playable

The time the visiting Club are due to commence their journey

Liaise with Managers **BUT** the decision as to whether the match is played is **the Referees**

If after consultation with the match Referee, the ground is declared fit and the away Clubs instructed to travel, then only in exceptional circumstances should the match Referee reverse the decision.

If an early inspection has not been carried out and the match Referee arrives at the ground to find the playing conditions in doubt due to unexpected deterioration in the weather, he should first consider as many of the above points before committing himself to a decision.

In the event of a pitch inspection being carried out by a Referee other than the match Referee, a fee of half the Referee's fee may be offered, plus travel expenses, paid by the Home Club. If the appointed Match Officials have reported to the ground they are entitled to their expenses plus half their match fee if the match is not played.

If the game is postponed following the inspection, either by the match Referee or another Referee, if the match day Referee is aware that an Assessor is appointed, contact **MUST** be made with that Assessor as soon as the decision is made to avoid unnecessary travel.

THIS NOTICE MUST BE DISPLAYED IN THE MATCH OFFICIALS DRESSING ROOM