OTAS LIVE

Supporting Events and Professionals at Every Stage

OTAS Insight, event security. Full report

Evacuating a venue late at night

An evacuation after the encore in Bristol, a fire alarm mid set in Glasgow, and how to clear a building that is already emptying



Illustrative image

Operational **Tactical** **Strategic**

OTAS Insight v2.0 · 3 November 2026 · Correct as of 3 November 2026

OTAS Live Ltd.

SUMMARY

Evacuations rarely come at a tidy moment. Plan for the one that starts when half the crowd has gone.

3

evacuations in these reports: after the show, mid set and 45 minutes in [1][2][3]

45

minutes into an arena show in Birmingham when it was stopped [3]

10

minutes into a set when a fire alarm emptied a Glasgow venue [2]

ACTION

Before your next show, agree who decides on an evacuation at the end of the night, how you sweep, and where the people outside stand.

By OTAS Insights. Edited by Kris Dailly. Correct as of 3 November 2026.



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01
Read this first

Sources: 14 public sources opened on 3 November 2026. They are reports from the Bristol Post, the Glasgow Times and BBC News, four HSE guidance pages, SIA, NPSA and HM Government guidance, and four pieces of UK fire safety law. This Insight is about running an evacuation once it has been called. It does not judge any threat, or how any venue or police force assessed one. We describe venues and artists rather than naming them in the text. Some source links carry names. Each fact carries its source number. Everything without a source number is OTAS guidance for event professionals.

On Sunday 1 November a concert hall in Bristol carried out a precautionary evacuation after a hoax concern was raised with its security team once the show had ended [1]. Most of the audience had already left, and those still inside left quickly and safely [1]. Police carried out a full assessment and the area was declared safe [1]. Two nights earlier, on Friday 30 October, a fire alarm went off ten minutes into a set at a small Glasgow venue. Staff got the audience out safely, the crowd gathered across the road and the band played on in the street [2]. In May, an arena show in Birmingham was stopped about 45 minutes in and thousands of people were evacuated, on police advice. Nothing suspicious was found, and a man has since been charged [3]. This Insight is about the evacuation itself: who decides, how you sweep a building that is already emptying, and where the people outside go.

> **In short:** an evacuation at the end of the night still needs a decision, a full sweep and a plan for the crowd outside. Agree before doors who calls it, what the audience is told, how each area is checked, and where people stand once they are out.

Five things to take away

01	**Evacuations rarely happen at a tidy moment. Plan for the end of the night.**
02	**A building that is emptying anyway still needs a full sweep.**
03	**Agree before doors who calls an evacuation, and what the audience is told.**
04	**The crowd outside still needs stewarding, away from the road.**
05	**Record what happened and who confirmed the building was clear.**

ACTION

Read section 13, then agree one task for each level before your next event.



02

What was reported

Three reports, from Bristol, Glasgow and Birmingham [1][2][3]. We describe venues and artists rather than naming them in the text. Some source links carry names. We do not comment on any threat or how it was assessed.

Exits held open until the building is clear. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Bristol, 1 November

Where	A concert hall in Bristol, on a Sunday night [1].
When	After the show had ended, when most of the audience had already left [1].
What happened	A hoax concern was raised with the security team, and the venue carried out a precautionary evacuation. Those still inside left quickly and safely [1].
Afterwards	Police carried out a full assessment and the area was declared safe. The report said it was not known whether any arrests had been made [1].

Glasgow, 30 October

Where	The bar of a small music venue in Glasgow city centre [2].
What happened	A fire alarm went off ten minutes into a band's set. Staff got the audience out of the building safely [2].
Outside	The crowd gathered across the road from the venue, and the band played an acoustic set in the street [2].

Birmingham, 1 May

Where	An arena show in Birmingham [3].
What happened	The show was stopped about 45 minutes in, and thousands of people were evacuated. The promoters described it as a precautionary evacuation by venue management on police advice [3].
Afterwards	Police said nothing suspicious was found. A man was charged with communicating false information, and the show was rescheduled [3].

	As reported
Bristol	After the show, most of the audience gone [1]
Glasgow	Ten minutes into a set [2]
Birmingham	About 45 minutes in, thousands evacuated [3]
Injuries reported	None in any of the three reports [1][2][3]
Outcome	Bristol declared safe [1]. Birmingham, nothing suspicious found [3]

Table 1. Three evacuations, as reported. Bristol Post [1], Glasgow Times [2], BBC News [3].

ACTION

Ask your team: if an evacuation was called as the last encore ended, who would make sure every area was checked?

03

Three moments in the night

The three reports cover three different moments [1][2][3].

	When	The challenge
Glasgow	Ten minutes into a set [2]	A full room, and a crowd standing near the road outside
Birmingham	About 45 minutes in [3]	Thousands of people to move at once
Bristol	After the show [1]	A building already emptying, and fewer people inside

Table 3. Three evacuations at three moments. Facts from [1][2][3]. The challenge column is OTAS guidance.

ACTION

Check your plan works at each of these three moments.



04

What UK guidance says about leaving

In brief, from HSE event safety guidance [4][5][6][7]. Not legal advice.

A steward with a torch checks an empty auditorium. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Plan the leaving

- HSE names leaving and dispersal as one of three phases to plan, alongside arrival and circulation [5].
- For larger crowds it says to encourage phased departures [5].
- People should be able to evacuate quickly to a safe place in an emergency [4].

Keep the routes ready

- Before people are let in, all exits should be unlocked, routes clear and emergency arrangements in place [5].
- HSE says to plan a control point, and back up loud hailers in case the PA fails [7].

Know who decides

- In a venue, your evacuation plan must fit the venue's fire risk assessment and emergency procedures. In England and Wales the responsible person must set these procedures and nominate enough competent people to carry out an evacuation [11]. In Scotland these duties are in Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and regulation 14 of the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006 [12][13]. In Northern Ireland they are in Part III of the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and regulation 14 of the Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 [14]. Agree with the venue whether a fire alarm means leave at once or a short staff check first.
- The organiser keeps overall responsibility for the safety of the public [6].
- HSE says roles should be clear for both normal and emergency situations [6].
- After the event, HSE says to debrief and record what worked and what did not [4].

HSE also warns that crowd incidents can develop very quickly [7].

ACTION

Check that your emergency plan covers an evacuation during load out, not just one during the show.

05

When leaving is not the safest option

Not every evacuation is for a fire. If the concern is a threat, leaving may not be the safest option.

Martyn's Law, the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, became law on 3 April 2025 and covers the whole UK, including Scotland. Its duties are not in force yet. The SIA, its regulator, expects them to start in spring 2027 [8]. Then premises in scope where 200 or more people may be present, and events of 800 or more where entry is checked, for example by ticket, pass, payment or membership, will need procedures for a suspected attack: evacuation, invacuation, lockdown and communication [8]. There is no legal duty yet, but planning for them now is sensible. This is a summary, not legal advice.

Plan where people go when leaving is not the safest option. For a threat, use the PA rather than the fire alarm, and move people well away rather than to the usual fire assembly point [10].

ACTION

Agree with the venue and the police where people go if the concern is a threat.

06

The evacuation script

Agree the words before doors. They need to sound different from the end of the show. OTAS guidance.

On the PA

- "Ladies and gentlemen, this is an evacuation. Please leave the building now by the nearest exit."
- "Follow the stewards. Do not stop for coats. Move away from the doors and stay off the road."

From stewards

- "This way, please. Keep moving, and cross only where we show you."
- "Is anyone else in there with you?"

ACTION

Write the evacuation script for your venue, and test it on the PA during set up.



07

Why closing is hard

In Bristol most people had already gone [1]. In Glasgow the crowd stood across the road [2]. The rest of this section is OTAS guidance, drawing on HSE.

The crowd outside still needs stewarding. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

An evacuation at the end of the night

1	2	3	4	5
Concern raised	Decision made	Audience told	Building swept	Clear confirmed

The sweep is the step most often cut short when people are already leaving. OTAS guidance.

Fewer staff

Stewards are standing down, bars are closing and supervisors are on load out. The team that would run an evacuation is smaller.

A mixed building

Some people are leaving, some are queuing for coats or toilets, some are still in their seats. Each needs a different message.

False comfort

A building that looks empty may not be. Toilets, back rooms, lifts and quiet corners still need checking.

The road

People leaving at night spill onto the street. An evacuation adds people standing still outside. In Glasgow the crowd gathered across the road [2].

The message

Telling people to leave when they are already leaving is easy to miss. The words need to say this is different.

ACTION

Count how many stewards you have on duty in the last 30 minutes of your next show, and check it is enough to sweep every area.

08

Seven things to agree before doors

These are the seven things to agree first. OTAS guidance unless a source is shown.

Before doors

Who decides	The named person who calls an evacuation, at any time of night [6].
Staffing	How many stewards stay on until the building is empty.
Sweep areas	Every area named, with a steward for each, including toilets and back rooms.
People who need help to leave	A plan for disabled people and anyone who cannot use the stairs, with named stewards, routes and refuges agreed with the venue before doors. Nobody is left in a refuge to wait for the fire service [9].
The words	The PA script and a loud hailer if the PA fails [7].
Outside	Where people stand, away from the doors and the road [4].
The record	Who confirms each area clear, and who logs it.

ACTION

Give each of the seven a named owner today.

09

Signs your evacuation plan only works mid show

Each of these is OTAS guidance, drawn from the three reports and HSE.

Signs the plan only works mid show

01 The plan assumes a full house

Every role and route is written for the middle of the show, not for doors or the end of the night.

02 Sweep areas have no names

Nobody is named for toilets, back rooms, lifts or stairs once stewards stand down.

03 No message for people leaving

The PA script only covers a seated or standing audience, not people already in the foyer.

04 No place outside

The plan says leave the building, but not where to stand or how to stay off the road [4].

05 No record

Nobody writes down who confirmed each area was clear, or when.

OTAS guidance, drawn from the reports [1][2][3] and HSE [4].

ACTION

Read your emergency plan for each of these five signs, and fix the first one you find.

10

Plan the evacuation for every part of the night

Five stages, from the plan to the debrief. OTAS guidance unless a source is shown.

Five stages, from the plan to the people outside



STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5
Plan	**Staff**	**Tell**	**Sweep**	**Outside**
Who decides, every phase	Enough to sweep it all	Say it is different	Every area, final exits open	Safe place, off the road

From the plan in this Insight. OTAS guidance.

Stage 1. Plan

Write who decides on an evacuation, and who advises them, for doors, the show and the end of the night [6].

Stage 2. Staff

Keep enough stewards on duty until the building is empty to sweep every area. Name each sweep area.

Stage 3. Tell

Use short, clear words on the PA and from stewards. Say this is an evacuation, not the end of the show. Have loud hailers ready [7].

Stage 4. Sweep

Check every area you can safely reach, including toilets, back rooms, lifts and stairs. Never enter smoke or fire. Report any area you could not check to control, so the fire service or police are told. Hold the final exits open until the sweep is done. Close internal doors behind you as each area is cleared, unless the venue plan says otherwise.

Stage 5. Outside

Move people to a safe place away from the doors and off the road [4]. Steward the kerb. Record who confirmed each area clear.

Part	What it needs
Who decides	The named person who calls an evacuation, at any time of night
Sweep areas	Each area with a named steward, including toilets and back rooms
The words	The PA and steward script for an evacuation, different from the end of show
Outside	Where people stand, away from the doors and the road
Help to leave	Named stewards, routes and refuges for people who need help
The record	Who confirmed each area clear, and when

Table 2. What to agree before doors. OTAS guidance.

ACTION

Walk your sweep route at the end of your next show, and time it.

11
The people outside

Once people are out, the job is not over. OTAS guidance unless a source is shown.

At the kerb

Off the road	Steward the kerb and keep people on the pavement, especially on dark, wet streets.
Away from the doors	Move people far enough away that the exits stay clear for staff and the emergency services.
Information	Tell people what is happening, even if the answer is that you do not know yet.

Afterwards

- Agree with the police or fire service when people may go back in, or leave.
- Help people find coats, friends and transport.
- Hold a short debrief and record it [4].
- For a threat, follow police advice on where people go, and do not hold them close to the building [10].

ACTION

Mark your outside area on the site plan, and agree it with the venue.

12
Roles in an evacuation

Four roles, each with one named person. OTAS guidance, drawing on HSE [6].

Role	What they own
Event safety officer	The decision, in line with the venue fire plan and with police or fire service advice
Head of security	The sweep, area by area
PA operator	The evacuation script, and the loud hailer if the PA fails
Outside supervisor	The kerb, the outside area and information for people

Table 4. Roles in an evacuation. OTAS guidance.

ACTION

Put a name against each role on the running order, including the last hour of the night.

13
What to do at each level

Operational

Know your area

Check and report

Keep off the road

Know your sweep area. On the call, check every part of it you can safely reach, including toilets and back rooms, and report it clear. Never enter smoke or fire. Report any area you could not check. Outside, keep people off the road.

Tactical

Keep enough on

Sweep area by area

Hold final exits open

Keep enough stewards on until the building is empty. Run the sweep area by area, and hold the final exits open until every area is reported clear.

Strategic

Name who decides

Agree the outside

Debrief, record

Write who decides on an evacuation at every part of the night. Agree the words and the outside area with the venue and the police. Debrief and record it.

ACTION

Pick one action at your level and do it before your next show.

14
Closing checklist

OTAS guidance unless a source is shown.

Before doors

- A named person who calls an evacuation at any time.
- A sweep plan with every area named.
- People who need help to leave: a plan for disabled people and anyone who cannot use the stairs, with named stewards, routes and refuges agreed with the venue before doors. Nobody is left in a refuge to wait for the fire service [9].
- An evacuation script, and a loud hailer [7].
- An outside area away from the doors and the road.

Last hour

- Enough stewards on to sweep every area.
- Exits kept clear until the building is empty.
- The PA staffed until the last person is out.

After

- A log of who confirmed each area clear.
- A short debrief with stewards and the venue [4].

ACTION

Print this checklist for your next show, and check it in the last hour.

15
What we do not know yet

- How the Bristol venue swept the building, and how long it took.
- What set off the fire alarm in Glasgow.
- The outcome of the Birmingham case, which is before the court.

ACTION

We will update this Insight if the venues or the police publish more. We will not comment on the Birmingham case while it is before the court.

16

Coming up: Christmas shows and late finishes

Christmas shows, comedy tours and late club nights run across the UK through December, many finishing late on dark, wet streets. An evacuation at the end of those nights needs the same plan as one in the middle of the show [4][5].

ACTION

If you need support with evacuation plans or sweep procedures for your venue or event, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

Questions

Do we need to sweep if most people have already gone?

Yes. Toilets, back rooms, lifts and quiet corners still need checking. In Bristol most people had already left [1], but an evacuation means confirming everyone is out.

Who should decide to evacuate?

A named person in your plan, with the authority to act at any time of night. HSE says the organiser keeps overall responsibility for public safety [6].

What should we tell the audience?

Short, calm words that say this is an evacuation, not the end of the show, and where to go. Use the PA, stewards and loud hailers [7].

Where should people go once they are out?

To a safe place away from the doors, off the road, agreed in advance [4]. In Glasgow the crowd gathered across the road [2].

Does this Insight say when to evacuate for a threat?

No. It is about running an evacuation once it is called. Threat assessment is for the venue, the police and your security advisers.

If an evacuation was called as your last encore ended, who would check the toilets?

ACTION

Send us your question and we will add the answer to the next update.

Sources

Web sources opened 3 November 2026 and labelled with their publisher.

1. **Bristol Post, concert hall evacuated after hoax threat, 2 November 2026** bristolpost.co.uk
2. **Glasgow Times, Glasgow gig continues outside after venue evacuated, report of 30 October 2026** glasgowtimes.co.uk
3. **BBC News, show rescheduled after arena evacuation, 6 May 2026** bbc.com
4. **HSE, crowd management, assess the risks** hse.gov.uk
5. **HSE, crowd management, controls** hse.gov.uk
6. **HSE, set clear roles and responsibilities** hse.gov.uk
7. **HSE, crowd controls inside the venue** hse.gov.uk
8. **SIA, Understanding Martyn's Law and the SIA's role as regulator, gov.uk, 17 July 2026** gov.uk
9. **HM Government, Fire safety risk assessment: means of escape for disabled people** gov.uk
10. **NPSA, Evacuation, invacuation and lockdown guidance** npsa.gov.uk
11. **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, article 15** legislation.gov.uk
12. **Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, Part 3** legislation.gov.uk
13. **Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006, regulation 14** legislation.gov.uk
14. **Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010, regulation 14** legislation.gov.uk

Related OTAS Insights

These are links to other OTAS Insights pieces, not to any OTAS Live product or service.

When a rumour moves faster than your stewards
Irritant spray in the crowd: the first five minutes

Guidance: this Insight summarises HSE guidance as published on hse.gov.uk, with SIA, NPSA and HM Government guidance and UK fire safety law. It is not legal advice. Ask your council, the police, the fire service and your safety advisory group what applies to your event.

Interest: OTAS Live Ltd, which publishes OTAS Insights, sells event operations services, handbooks and training related to this topic.

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Images are OTAS style images, generated from real photography. None is a record of a specific event.

ACTION

Check the sources before you quote them, and tell us if any link has changed.

OVER TO YOU

If an evacuation was called as your last encore ended, who would check the toilets?

If you need support with evacuation plans or sweep procedures for your venue or event, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

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