



High winds at outdoor events

When to go, hold, stop or evacuate

OTAS Insight: a wind decision framework for event professionals, from supplier limits to reopening

Operational · Tactical · Strategic | Correct as of 20 October 2026



General information, not advice

Read this first. This Insight is general information for event professionals. It is not legal, engineering or weather advice. It does not replace your own risk assessment or current Met Office warnings. Nor does it replace the instructions of the people who designed, supplied or built your structures. Warnings can change quickly, so check the live Met Office warnings for your site before and during every event. Get competent advice for your own site and structures.

Correct as of 20 October 2026. Check the live Met Office warnings at metoffice.gov.uk before and during every event.

The short version: what to sort before the wind arrives

What the Met Office says

Read the whole warning

- Storm Austen: yellow wind warning, 00:00 to 12:00 BST, Friday 23 October
- Gusts of 50 to 60mph widely, over 70mph on exposed coasts
- Yellow can mean significant impacts that are less certain
- Recheck: the page said warnings may be out of date

Get it in writing

Limits for every structure

- Wind limits come from the designer, supplier or manufacturer
- Mean wind or gust, which unit, at what height
- What to do at each stage, and how long it takes

Agree who decides

Triggers and roles

- Measure on site with an anemometer, not an app
- Agree watch, hold, stop and evacuate triggers
- Name who calls each stage: Operational, Tactical, Strategic
- Inspect every structure before reopening

This deck sets no wind speed limit. Met Office warning details as at 18:26 BST, 20 October 2026.

Storm Austen: the wind warning as published

Item	What the Met Office says	What it means for event teams
Warning Issued 11:04 BST, 19 October	Yellow warning for wind. Low likelihood (10 to 25%), significant impact	A yellow warning can still mean significant impacts
Valid Friday 23 October 2026	00:00 BST to 12:00 BST	Plan builds, ingress and egress around this window
Areas	South West England, London and South East England, Wales and the West Midlands (Herefordshire)	Check your local authority in the live warning
Gusts	50 to 60mph possible, and 70mph or more in some coastal or exposed areas	Compare with the limit for each structure, in the same unit
Easing	Winds will probably ease late morning into the early afternoon	Inspect before reopening anything
After Friday	More wind and rain likely through the weekend and into next week	Clocks go back at 02:00 BST, Sunday 25 October. Label every time

As published at 18:26 BST, 20 October 2026, when the page showed a notice that warnings may be out of date. The RSS feed gives the same window in UTC. Recheck on the day.

How to read a Met Office warning: two things set the colour

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things set a warning's colour: the likely impact and how likely it is

Read the whole warning. Yellow and amber each cover a range of impacts and likelihoods. A yellow warning can mean significant impacts that are less certain.

A name is a signal. A storm is named when it could lead to an amber or red warning. Austen was named under a yellow warning.

Your site is not the forecast. Wind changes with height, ground and nearby buildings. Measure it on site.

Sources: Met Office weather warnings guide, UK Storm Centre, storm naming blog and How we measure wind, all viewed 20 October 2026.

Mean wind and gusts: know which one your limit means

- **Gust.** The highest 3-second average wind speed in a period.
- **Mean wind.** The average over the 10 minutes before a reading.
- **Forecast tables.** The speed shown is the mean. The gust is the highest expected before the next time shown.
- **Units.** 1 knot is 1.15mph, or about 0.51 metres per second. Convert every limit before the event.
- **Bold is not a limit.** Met Office tables show winds of 25 knots (29mph) and above in bold. That is a display rule, not a safety limit.

Ask each supplier

Is the limit a mean wind or a gust?

Agreed in writing

- The unit and the height
- A lower limit for building or lifting
- Actions at each stage
- Time and crew needed
- Who inspects after high winds

No official source used here sets one limit for all events.

Where limits come from: six questions for every supplier

01 • Limit

What is the wind limit?

For use with people on or near the structure.

Mean wind or gust, unit and height

02 • Build

Is there a lower limit?

For building, lifting or taking down.

HSE: build up can be the highest-risk work

03 • Actions

What happens at each stage?

For example remove banners, lower or stop use.

Added banners can add wind loading

04 • Time

How long does it take?

Time and trained crew for each action.

Set triggers early enough to finish

05 • Stability

Ballast, guys and anchors

What it relies on, and who checks them.

HSE: ballast stays in place while in use

06 • Inspection

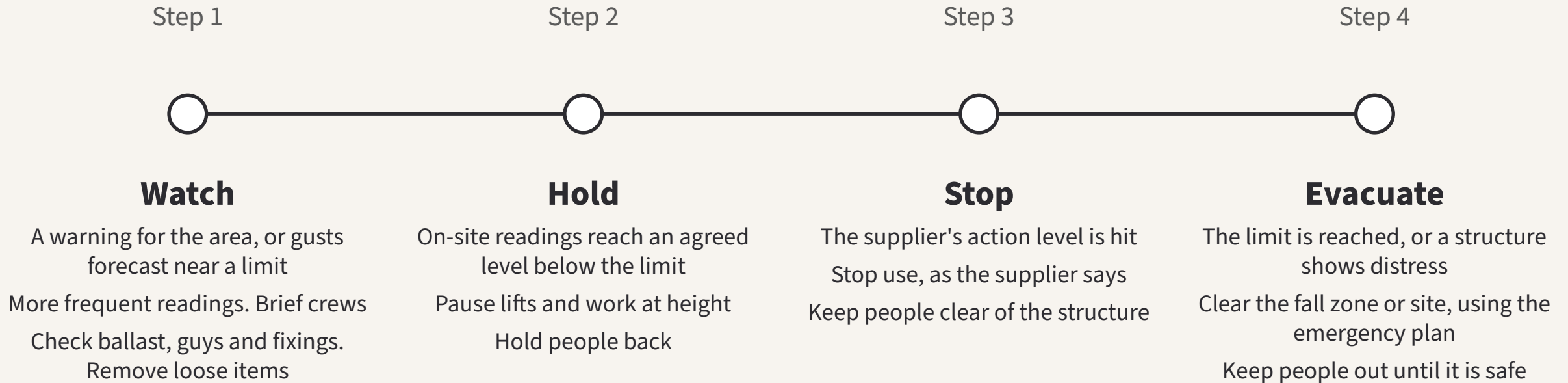
Who inspects after wind?

A competent person, before people go back in.

Agree what they check, and record it

Sources: HSE outdoor equipment and inflatables guidance, and research for HSE on temporary demountable structures (Not Met Office).

Trigger points: watch, hold, stop, evacuate



Readings are set with each supplier: this deck sets none. HSE says take an inflatable out of service before its limiting wind speed is reached.

Monitoring and communications: measure, log, tell

- **Measure on site.** HSE says use a suitable anemometer, placed so the structure does not block the airflow.
- **Not an app.** HSE says smartphone weather apps are not a substitute, because they miss local conditions.
- **Check the warnings.** At agreed times, by a named person, using at least two routes.
- **Log everything.** Time, place, reading, warning in force, decision and reason.
- **Plan ingress and egress.** The warning mentions possible longer journeys, road closures and power cuts affecting mobile phones.

Communications

Brief weather forecast news at inductions and briefings, as HSE suggests

Write short messages for each stage, in advance

Test a radio fallback in case mobile coverage fails

Tell crew, contractors, audiences and partners the same story

On the coast

Keep queues and walkways away from sea fronts. Large waves can sweep people off their feet.

Actions: Operational, for crew, riggers and stewards

01 • Before

Know the triggers

Trigger readings for your area, and who to tell.

Ask if you have not been briefed

02 • Before

Secure loose items

Banners, signs, bins, barriers and kit.

The warning lists tents among loose items

03 • During

Report at once

Moving ballast, slack guys or a structure that looks wrong.

Tell your supervisor straight away

04 • During

Act on every call

Hold, stop and evacuate calls, straight away.

No work at height during a hold

05 • Evacuate

Keep people clear

Help clear the fall zone, as briefed.

Check in at the agreed point

06 • After

Wait for the all clear

No reuse until a competent inspection.

Report any damage you saw

Operational: the people who build, run and steward the site. Raise any concern at once, and step back if you think it is unsafe.

Actions: Tactical, for event, safety and site leads

Before the event

Plan and agree

- Supplier limits in writing for every structure
- Triggers set for watch, hold, stop and evacuate
- Anemometer placed, with a named person reading it
- Messages written for each stage

On the day

Watch and brief

- Check the Met Office warnings at agreed times
- Log every reading and decision
- Brief every shift on the triggers
- Test the radio fallback

When the wind rises

Act early

- Call hold or stop in time to finish the actions
- Keep people clear of fall zones
- Plan ingress and egress around the warning
- Tell the Strategic lead at once

After the wind: arrange a competent inspection before reopening, debrief and review the risk assessment.

Actions: Strategic, for organisers and licence holders

01 • Before

Name the decision makers

Who calls each stage, with deputies.

Write it into the event plan

02 • Before

Fund it

Monitoring, trained crew and time to act.

Lead time is part of the plan

03 • Before

Contract for it

Supplier limits, actions and inspection.

Get it all in writing

04 • On the day

Back the calls

Including calls that cost money.

Record the reasons

05 • Wind rising

Decide early

Postpone or cancel in time to act safely.

Tell partners and audiences early

06 • After

Reopen with care

Inspection first, then a debrief.

Review the risk assessment

Strategic: the organiser, director or licence holder. Owns go, postpone and cancel decisions, budgets and the record of why.

After the wind: inspect, recheck, review

Before reopening

Inspect first

- A competent person inspects every structure
- Check ballast, guys, anchors, fixings and ground
- Record what was checked, and by whom

More wind coming

Recheck

- The Met Office expects more wind and rain into next week
- Weakened structures can be damaged by lesser gusts
- Clocks go back at 02:00 BST, Sunday 25 October

Learn

Debrief and review

- Debrief after the event and after any incident
- Review the risk assessment if things have changed
- Keep readings, warnings and decisions together

Sources: Met Office impact tables and Storm Austen news release. HSE event guidance and MHSWR regulation 3 (Not Met Office).

What we haven't verified: check these for your event

Point	Status	What to do
Whether the Storm Austen warning changes in time, area or colour	Not knowable yet	Check the live Met Office warnings before and during the event
Whether the warnings page was up to date at 18:26 BST, 20 October	Page showed an out of date notice	Recheck on the day
The wind limit for any structure	Not covered	Get it in writing from its designer, supplier or manufacturer
Local wind at your site	Not knowable from a forecast	Measure on site
Who is legally responsible on a job	Needs a solicitor	Take advice. This deck is not legal advice
Rules for events in Northern Ireland	Not covered in detail	Check HSENI guidance

Also check: the structural standard your suppliers work to, and any conditions in your event licence or site agreement.



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Before and during every event, check the live Met Office warnings:
metoffice.gov.uk

Official sources only: Met Office, HSE, HSENI, GOV.UK and legislation.gov.uk.
Full list in the full report.

Spotted an error? Tell us via the OTAS Insights page and we will correct it and update the 'Correct as of' date.

Correct as of 20 October 2026. Interest: OTAS Live Ltd, which publishes EPGN, sells event operations services, handbooks and training related to this topic. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

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Briefing card • about 1 minute

“Strong wind is forecast today. Each structure has a wind limit from its supplier. We are measuring the wind on site.

If you hear hold, stop lifts and work at height. If you hear stop, keep people clear of that structure. If you hear evacuate, follow the emergency plan.

Wind lead: _____ **Readings every:** _____

Assembly point: _____ **Radio channel:** _____

If anything looks wrong, such as moving ballast or slack guys, tell your supervisor at once. Any questions?”

Read at the start of each shift on a windy day. Fill in the blanks first.

Wind on the day: the checklist, by level

Operational triggers known. Loose items secured. Report at once. Act on every call. Wait for the all clear.

Tactical limits in writing. Anemometer and log. Warnings checked. Messages ready. Inspection before reopening.

Strategic decision makers named. Calls backed. Decide early on postponing. Debrief and review.



Work with OTAS

Planning wind decisions for your next outdoor event?

Request a call with OTAS to discuss how we can help <https://otas.live/contact/>

