OTAS LIVE

Supporting Events and Professionals at Every Stage

OTAS Insight, event safety. Article

When the weather makes the call

Fog that hid two firework displays and a televised cup tie in Greater Manchester, a storm that cancelled light trails and Diwali events, and how to agree the numbers that delay, pause or stop your event before the weather decides for you



A steward with a radio stands by crowd barriers in dense fog at night.
OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Operational **Tactical** **Strategic**

OTAS Insight v2.0 · 9 November 2026 · Correct as of 9 November 2026

OTAS Live Ltd.

SUMMARY

Fog and wind will not wait for a meeting. Agree the numbers that delay, pause and stop your event, and name the one person who calls it.

2

firework displays in Greater Manchester barely visible in fog on 7 November [1]

100 m

visibility the Met Office said fog could fall below the next night [3]

80 mph

gusts possible on exposed coasts in the storm that cancelled events [4]

ACTION

Before your next outdoor event, write down the wind, fog and lightning numbers that change what you do, and who makes the call.

By OTAS Insights. Edited by Kris Dailly. Correct as of 9 November 2026.



A steward with a radio stands by barriers in thick fog. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

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01
Read this first

Sources: 25 public sources opened on 9 November 2026. They are four news reports and one sports report on the fog and the storm, Met Office warning, fog, lightning, storm and wind pages, a Met Office storm summary, HSE event, structure and firework guidance, industry guidance on temporary structures and firework displays, a published wind management plan, RoSPA lightning advice, UKHSA cold weather alerts, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Northern Ireland health and safety Order of 1978 and a report on an inspection of event safety oversight. This Insight does not say any decision was right or wrong. The teams involved made their calls on the night with what they knew. It is about how any event team can agree its weather numbers in advance. We describe events and venues 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 the evening of Saturday 7 November, thick fog settled over Greater Manchester. Flights into the city's airport were diverted, and two firework displays were barely visible. Some people left part way through [1]. At a televised FA Cup tie the same evening, the commentator could not tell which team had the ball from about the hour mark, and players could not see both goals from the centre circle. The game was played to the end, through extra time and penalties. BBC Sport reported it came very close to being called off [2]. The next night the Met Office had fog warnings over much of England, with visibility in places below 100 metres [3]. Two weeks earlier, a named storm brought an amber wind warning and gusts up to 80 mph on exposed coasts. A light trail in Liverpool was cancelled two nights running and a Diwali celebration in central London was called off [4] [5]. This Insight is not about who made the right call. It is about making sure your call is made on numbers you agreed before the weather arrived.

> **In short:** **weather rarely forces a stop on its own. People do, late, when nobody agreed the numbers. Before an outdoor event, set the wind, visibility and lightning triggers for each level of response, name one person who calls delay, pause or stop, and write the words the team and the crowd will hear.**

Five things to take away

01	A warning tells you the weather may change. Your triggers tell you what you will do when it does.
02	Measure wind where and how your structure designer or supplier specifies, against the limits they set, not against a phone app.
03	Set a visibility trigger based on what your stewards, CCTV and display operator need to see.
04	One named person calls delay, pause or stop. Everyone else reports what they see.
05	Write the public address words now, and log every reading and every decision on the night.

ACTION

Read the case, then share the actions with your team.



02

What was reported

Two weather events, as reported [1] to [6]. We describe events and venues rather than naming them in the text. Some source links carry names. We do not judge any decision.

A person with a radio watches smoke blow across firework racks at night. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Fog, 7 and 8 November

Where	Greater Manchester on the Saturday evening, then much of England, eastern Wales and Northern Ireland on the Sunday night and Monday morning [1][3].
Displays	Two firework displays were barely visible in the fog. Some people left part way through. One club said it was disappointed but the community still enjoyed the night [1].
A cup tie	Visibility at a televised FA Cup tie was described as down to a few yards. Players could not see both goals or the corner flags from the centre circle. The match went to penalties [1][2].
Warnings	Yellow fog warnings ran to 11:00 on Monday 9 November. Visibility could fall below 100 m. Crashes on the M20 and the A303 were reported in fog [3].

Storm, 24 and 25 October

The warning	An amber wind warning ran from 21:00 on Saturday 24 October to 21:00 on Sunday, with gusts of 60 to 70 mph and up to 80 mph on exposed coasts [4]. The storm was named on 22 October [7].
Cancelled	A free light trail in Liverpool was cancelled for a second night [5]. A Diwali celebration in central London was cancelled on the advice of independent health and safety experts [4].
Closed	A floodlit event at a North Yorkshire estate and a castle in Edinburgh closed. Markets and grass pitch fixtures were called off [4][5].
Afterwards	The Met Office recorded gusts over 70 knots, about 81 mph, on the west coast. Two men died after trees fell [6].

	As reported
Fog displays	Two firework displays barely visible. Some spectators left [1]
Cup tie	Played to the end in fog, through penalties [2]
Fog warnings	Yellow, visibility below 100 m in places [3]
Storm warning	Amber, gusts up to 80 mph on coasts [4]
Storm events	Light trail, Diwali event and floodlit event cancelled or closed [4][5]

Table 1. Fog and storm, as reported. News reports [1][3][4][5], sports report [2], Met Office [6][7].

ACTION

Ask your team: if fog came down an hour before your event tonight, who would decide whether it goes ahead, and on what number?

03

Wind, fog and lightning in numbers

The numbers the guidance uses. They are background for your own triggers, not limits for your site.

Wind

- A published wind management plan measures the 3 second gust at 10 m and sets action levels at 75 and 90 percent of the operational maximum gust [14].
- To turn knots into mph, multiply by about 1.15 [22]. The storm on 24 October gusted over 70 knots, about 81 mph, on the west coast [6].
- If wind arrangements are not in place, HSE says it may be prudent to keep an exclusion zone of about 1.5 times the tower height around the tower [15].

Fog

- Fog is visibility below 1,000 m. Below 100 m is dense fog. Public forecasts use 180 m [9].
- Mist is visibility above 1 km [3][9].

Lightning

- Lightning can strike up to 10 miles from the centre of a storm [10].
- The 30/30 rule: suspend at 30 seconds or less from flash to thunder. Restart 30 minutes after the last thunder [11].

ACTION

Write the three numbers that matter most at your next event on the front page of your event safety plan.



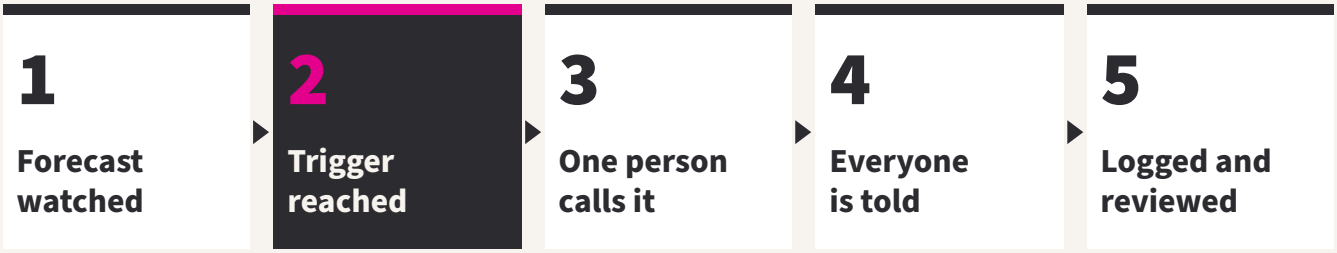
04

Why weather calls come late

Each reason is about people and plans, not the weather. OTAS guidance.

A team in safety vests stands in thick fog under lights. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Decide on the number, not the mood



The trigger is the step that turns a forecast into a decision. OTAS guidance.

A warning is not a trigger

A yellow warning covers a wide area. It does not tell you what to do at your site, so teams wait to see what happens.

No number agreed

If nobody has written the gust, visibility or lightning numbers, every decision becomes a debate on the night.

Everyone waits for someone else

The display operator, the structure supplier, the venue and the safety advisory group each expect another to call it. Safety advisory groups give advice and are not statutory [24]. In OTAS guidance, the organiser decides.

The crowd is already in

Once people have travelled and paid, stopping feels harder. That pressure is strongest at the moment the call matters most.

Fog hides the problem

In fog, stewards cannot see the next post, CCTV loses the far end and the display operator may not see the fall out area. The risk grows while it is harder to see.

ACTION

Find the one weather decision at your next event that nobody has a number for, and agree that number this week.

05

Six things to agree before the event

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

Before the event

The limits	The weather limit for every structure, display and activity, from the person who sets it [13][14].
The triggers	Watch, act and stop for wind, fog, lightning, rain and cold.
The owner	One named person who calls delay, pause or stop, with a deputy.
The operator	The display operator can stop the display, and you will not overrule that [20].
The words	Public address and radio words for delay, pause, stop and restart [16].
The message out	How you will tell people who are not yet on site, by web and social media [12][16].

ACTION

Give each of the six a named owner today.

06

Trigger chart

An example of watch, act and stop levels for each hazard. Your figures come from your designers, suppliers and display operator. OTAS guidance unless a source is shown.

Hazard	Watch	Act	Stop
Wind	Gusts forecast near the lowest structure limit on site [8]	75 percent of the lowest operational maximum gust, and rising. Staff on alert [14]	90 percent. Clear the public from the area [14]
Fog	Fog warning or forecast for your area [8][9]	Stewards cannot see the next post or the far exits. CCTV loses the far end	Stewards, CCTV or the display operator cannot see what they need to keep people safe
Lightning	Thunderstorm or lightning warning, or storms forecast [8][11]	Thunder heard. You are in range [10]	30 seconds or less from flash to thunder. Suspend and move people to shelter [11]
Rain and ground	Heavy rain warning [8]	Standing water on routes or soft ground at entries [17]	Routes or exits no longer safe to use
Cold	Cold Health Alert in force [21]	Long outdoor waits during a delay	Welfare plan in action, or the event ends early

Table 3. Example trigger chart. Replace every limit with the figures set by your designers, suppliers and display operator. OTAS guidance unless a source is shown.

ACTION

Copy this chart into your event safety plan and replace every limit with your own figures.

07
Public address scripts

Agree the words before the event, as HSE advises [16]. Keep them short, calm and the same every time. OTAS guidance.

Delay, before doors or the display

- "We are delaying the start because of the weather. Please stay where you are. We will update you in ten minutes."

Pause, during the event

- "We are pausing the show because of the weather. Please stay where you are and follow the stewards. We will update you shortly."

Stop and leave

- "Because of the weather, tonight's event is ending now. Please leave calmly by the nearest exit, following the stewards. Thank you."

Restart

- "Thank you for your patience. The weather has improved and we are ready to restart."

ACTION

Read each script aloud at your next briefing, and record them for your public address system.

08

What to do at each level

Operational

Know the words

Report what you see

Follow the call

Know the words for delay, pause and stop. Report what you see, such as gusts, fog at your post or thunder, straight away. Follow the call when it comes.

Tactical

Read and log

Report the trigger

Brief the words

Read the wind and visibility at set times and log them. Tell the decision owner the moment a trigger is reached. Brief the words at the start of each shift.

Strategic

Set the triggers

Name the owner

Tell people early

Collect the limits, set the triggers and name the person who calls it. Agree them with the display operator and suppliers, and plan how you will tell people who are not yet on site.

ACTION

Pick one action at your level and do it before your next outdoor event this winter.

09

What we do not know yet

- What triggers, if any, the displays and the cup tie in the fog had agreed in advance. This is not public.
- What visibility was measured at each site. The reports describe it, but do not give a figure [1][2].
- How the cancelled storm events reached their decisions, beyond what was reported [4][5].
- Whether any review of the fog evening is planned. None had been announced as of 9 November.

ACTION

We will update this Insight if the organisers, the authorities or the Met Office publish more. We will not judge decisions made on the night.

10

Coming up: winter events and the next named storm

Christmas markets, light trails, switch ons and New Year events run outdoors through the darkest, foggiest and windiest weeks of the year. The core season for Cold Health Alerts runs until 31 March [21], and the Met Office names storms through the winter [7]. The plan that works is the one agreed before the forecast turns.

ACTION

If you need support setting weather triggers and stop decisions for your event, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

Questions

Should we stop when a yellow warning is issued?

Not by itself. A warning tells you what impact the weather could have across an area [8]. Your triggers tell you what to do at your site. Use the warning to start watching and measuring.

What wind speed should we stop at?

The one your structure designer or supplier set for each structure, measured as they say. A published plan used 75 and 90 percent of the operational maximum gust as its alert and action levels [14]. Do not invent one.

Is there a legal visibility limit for events?

No single figure applies to every event. The Met Office calls visibility below 100 m dense fog [9]. Set your trigger by what your stewards, CCTV and display operator need to see.

Who can stop a firework display?

The display operator. Industry guidance says do not continue if the operator advises cancelling or stopping [20]. The organiser can also decide to stop it. This is OTAS guidance.

What is the 30/30 rule?

If the gap between a lightning flash and its thunder is 30 seconds or less, suspend outdoor activity. Wait 30 minutes after the last thunder before restarting [11].

Did the cup tie and the displays in the fog do the wrong thing?

We do not know, and we do not judge it. The reports describe the conditions, not the plans or numbers each team had agreed [1][2].

If fog came down over your event tonight, who would make the call, and on what number?

ACTION

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

Sources

Web sources opened 9 November 2026 and labelled by source type. Links are for checking only. Listing a source does not mean it endorses OTAS or has worked with OTAS.

1. **Regional newspaper report on thick fog, flight diversions and firework displays in Greater Manchester, 8 November 2026** manchestereveningnews.co.uk
2. **BBC Sport report on an FA Cup tie played in thick fog, 8 November 2026** bbc.co.uk
3. **BBC Weather report on fog warnings across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 8 November 2026** bbc.com
4. **National newspaper and PA report on a named storm, travel disruption and cancelled events, 24 October 2026** theguardian.com
5. **BBC News report on events and attractions closed by a named storm, 24 October 2026** bbc.co.uk
6. **Met Office, storm summary for two named storms, October 2026** metoffice.gov.uk
7. **Met Office, UK Storm Centre** weather.metoffice.gov.uk
8. **Met Office, weather warnings guide** metoffice.gov.uk
9. **Met Office, fog** metoffice.gov.uk
10. **Met Office, stay safe in thunder and lightning** weather.metoffice.gov.uk
11. **RoSPA, lightning safety** rospa.com
12. **The Purple Guide, weather chapter, January 2026 (subscription)** thepurpleguide.co.uk
13. **Institution of Structural Engineers, Temporary demountable structures: Guidance on procurement, design and use, fourth edition, 2017** istructe.org
14. **Published wind management plan for a temporary structure, filed with a planning application, 2022** docs.planning.org.uk
15. **HSE, event safety, outdoor equipment** hse.gov.uk
16. **HSE, event safety, incidents and emergencies** hse.gov.uk
17. **HSE, event safety, venue and site design** hse.gov.uk

18. **HSE, event safety, managing an event** hse.gov.uk
19. **HSE, organising firework displays** hse.gov.uk
20. **Explosives Industry Group, Working Together on Firework Displays, 2023** eig2.org.uk
21. **UKHSA, Weather Health Alerting System** gov.uk
22. **Met Office, Beaufort wind force scale** metoffice.gov.uk
23. **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, section 3** legislation.gov.uk
24. **BBC News report on a national inspection of event safety oversight, 4 September 2026** bbc.co.uk
25. **Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, article 5** legislation.gov.uk

Related OTAS Insights

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

Overhead banners and arches at winter markets
Stopping the show for the front of stage

Guidance: this Insight summarises Met Office, UKHSA, HSE and industry guidance and health and safety law in Great Britain as published on 9 November 2026. Northern Ireland has its own health and safety law. It is not legal or meteorological advice. Ask your structure designers and suppliers, your display operator 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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Events industry since 2008, internationally since 2015.

OTAS Live Ltd.

By OTAS Insights. Edited by Kris Dailly.

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ACTION

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

OVER TO YOU

If fog came down over your event tonight, who would make the call, and on what number?

If you need support setting weather triggers and stop decisions for your event, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

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