

Expert Insight: Why Sports Venues Present Some of the Most Complex Maintenance Challenges

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From seasonal occupancy to multi-use facilities, [SFG20](#) outlines the maintenance challenges that directly impact safety, compliance and operational performance.

Unlike conventional commercial buildings, sports venues operate in a uniquely demanding environment. From match days to concerts and major events, these facilities must accommodate large volumes of visitors while ensuring infrastructure performs excellently under intense pressure.

As such, maintenance plays a far greater role than simply keeping assets operational. It's fundamental to protecting public safety, maintaining regulatory compliance, brand reputation and supporting the commercial success of the venues.

With thousands of visitors, varied occupancy patterns and diverse venue usage, maintaining sports facilities presents a unique set of challenges. Anoop Bhasin, expert at [SFG20, the industry standard for sports facility maintenance](#), outlines the key maintenance pressures facing sports venues today and the risks FM teams need to be aware of.

1. Sports venues don't operate to a standard working week

Unlike most commercial buildings, sports venues do not operate to a predictable weekly schedule. Instead, they experience concentrated periods of intense activity, placing significant short-term demand on a wide

range of critical systems, from HVAC, power and lighting to catering facilities, lifts, turnstiles and sanitation infrastructure.

Whether it's a football, rugby, or cricket venue, the time available to carry out planned maintenance between events can be limited. In some cases, there may only be a few days, or even a few hours, between events, leaving maintenance teams with a narrow window to inspect, repair and maintain assets while ensuring preparations for the next event remain on track.

FM teams must work to strict gates-open times, broadcast commitments and hospitality expectations, while ensuring crowd flow assets are ready before people arrive. This creates significant pressure for maintenance teams, as it is an area where there is little room for failure. Even a single asset failure can lead to safety risks, refund claims, reputational damage and event cancellation costs, meaning planning and scheduling are essential.

2. Seasonality and the risk of under-maintained assets during quieter periods

While event days create intense operational demands, periods of low occupancy can present their own maintenance challenges.

Many sports operate seasonally, meaning the gaps between events are often long. Without appropriate strategies in place, quieter periods can create hidden risks. Water systems can stagnate, mechanical plants can deteriorate, batteries in emergency systems can fail, pests can become active, and poorly ventilated areas may develop indoor air quality or mould issues.

Quieter periods also create a recommissioning challenge, as assets that have seen limited use during off-season periods may require additional checks before a venue returns to full capacity. This is particularly important where public safety, water quality, ventilation, emergency systems or accessibility are concerned. Maintenance teams must ensure assets remain reliable and event-ready, helping to avoid operational issues and compliance risks.

A strong maintenance approach should distinguish between assets that can safely move to a lower activity profile, assets that must remain on a fixed regime, and assets that need recommissioning checks before the next major event.

3. Ageing and heritage assets require specialist approaches

Many of the most significant sports venues occupy buildings of historic and architectural value. Due to the scale and complexity of these buildings, the assets require more considered and careful decisions regarding materials, methods, and compliance requirements to ensure they remain safe and operational while preserving their character.

At the same time, newer venues bring a different set of operational and compliance challenges due to their increasingly complex mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems, as well as building management systems and smart technologies that require specialist knowledge to maintain effectively.

4. Multi-use venues and non-sporting events

A lot of the time, major sporting venues are not just solely used for sports. To maximise revenue and increase utilisation, many host a wide range of events throughout the year, including concerts, weddings, conferences and private functions.

While this creates commercial opportunities, it also introduces additional maintenance challenges. Non-sporting events can change the venue's risk profile by introducing temporary event infrastructure such as staging, generators, cabling, barriers, pop-up catering, temporary toilets and altered crowd routes.

Each event places different demands on venue infrastructure, meaning FM teams must ensure these additions are safely managed, while maintaining venues to a standard that supports multiple uses, rather than sports alone.

This requires a flexible maintenance approach that considers the full range of activities taking place over the course of the year and ensures assets remain safe, reliable and fit for purpose.

5. Inspection, scrutiny and split responsibility

Sports venue maintenance does not happen in isolation. Depending on the venue, FM teams may need to support local authority safety certification, Safety Advisory Group involvement, insurer reviews, internal governance and event-readiness checks. That means maintenance evidence is often as important as maintenance activity. Teams need to show what has been maintained, when it was completed, what defects were found, how actions were closed and who is responsible.

Responsibility can also be complex. A venue may involve an owner, club, operator, landlord, FM provider, event promoter, caterer, security provider and specialist contractors. If these boundaries are unclear, tasks can be missed, duplicated or assumed to sit with the wrong party. A structured maintenance approach helps clarify ownership, strengthen evidence and create a more defensible maintenance regime.

Anoop Bhasin at SFG20 adds: "In sports venues, the consequences of maintenance failures can be immediate and highly visible. A failure that might go unnoticed in commercial buildings can have a significant impact on a sports venue's reputation and commercial performance. This is particularly challenging for multi-use venues, where assets must support not only sporting events but also concerts, conferences, hospitality and private functions, each placing different demands on access, cleaning, catering, power and safety systems. Accessibility-related assets, including lifts, accessible entrances, automatic doors, accessible toilets, hearing loops, signage and viewing-area infrastructure, must also be maintained and event-ready to ensure all visitors can safely access and enjoy the venue and that venue owners do not face the reputational repercussions of failing in this area.

"As expectations around protective security increase and Martyn's Law comes into force, FM teams may also need to ensure that physical systems supporting preparedness are maintained and ready, including CCTV, access control, barriers, gates, communications, emergency routes and hostile vehicle mitigation measures where applicable.

“Another challenge for facilities teams is making sure maintenance is carried out at the right time and on the right assets. In many cases, some assets are maintained more often than necessary, which can increase costs and use valuable resources that could be used elsewhere. Other assets may not receive enough attention, leading to unexpected failure and higher repair costs in the future.

“Taking a structured approach to maintenance helps teams find the right balance. By ensuring maintenance is properly planned, facilities teams can improve asset reliability and help keep venues safe, compliant, well-maintained and ready for every event.”