

In accordance with Rule 23, 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) and/or the pitch is not in good condition then the following requirements **MUST** be followed, unless the League issues alternative guidance in exceptionally unusual circumstances, in advance of a scheduled round of fixtures.

In exceptional circumstances if a ground continues to be unfit, the League has the right to instruct a Club to play its' home matches at an alternative venue in accordance with Rule 20(A).

The Home Club

- a) must inspect their pitch prior to matchday to assess if it is fit to host the scheduled fixture.
- b) If there is any doubt as to whether the pitch will be fit, then the home Club must:
 - i) Contact the appointed match official(s) to inform them of the situation and check the best way to inform them if any pitch inspection on the day of the game is required. **Contact on match day should be by telephone unless agreed to the contrary.**
 - ii) Find out if the match referee is available to either:
 - inspect the ground personally if travel distance allows.
 - is available to be contacted by video call
 - is available to be contacted by telephone by an alternative Inspecting Referee
 - iii) Contact your opponents to inform them of the need for there to be a pitch inspection and check their departure time and the best way to inform them if any pitch inspection on the day of the game results in a postponement. **Contact on match day should be by telephone unless agreed to the contrary.**
- c) Ideally the match referee should inspect the pitch in person. If travel distance or other reasons make that impractical, the match referee may conduct an inspection by video call. This **MUST** be conducted from the ground and provide the match referee with a complete picture of the entire pitch. **Under no circumstances will photographs of the pitch be an acceptable alternative** to this process.
- d) If the match official cannot inspect the pitch in person or by video call, then the home club must have another suitable match official available to inspect **IN PERSON**. These arrangements should be made before matchday to avoid having to ring around on the morning of the game. Any inspecting referee must be a match official at Level 5 or above and must be made aware of this guidance document.
- e) The time of any inspection should consider:
 - The intended departure time of the opposition / match officials
 - The forecasted weather conditions on the day of the game and how these may affect the fitness of the pitch.
 - local knowledge of the groundman of pitch conditions and drainage
 - the time at which the match referee is available to be contacted by telephone / video call

Please NOTE that any Inspecting Referee must NOT be personally connected to the home Club nor be a close relative of any Officer or registered Player of the home Club.

- f) If after any inspection the game is postponed, ensure the away club and the match officials are notified as soon as practicable using the agreed contact procedures.
- g) If after any inspection the game is postponed, ensure the Fixture Director is informed **by telephone** on 07743 952081. as soon as possible and **no more than 30 minutes after the pitch inspection has taken place.** In **ALL UCL** League and Cup matches, you must also confirm the name of the Inspecting Referee to the League.
- h) Please ensure the Inspecting Referee completes the on-line postponement form as soon as practicable, which can be found on the following link:
<https://forms.gle/VpDxn3sf5TsUsF27>

Please note that for Cup matches, the procedure to follow to inspect grounds and/or postpone matches may be dictated differently by that Competition. **However, it is still the responsibility of the Club to ensure the Fixture Director is notified** as per point (g) above of any postponement.

The Away Club

Must ensure that they inform the home club, when requested, the time they are leaving to travel to the ground, the person to contact on match day regarding the outcome of any pitch inspection, and how contact should be made. The departure time should be realistic based on the time needed to travel between the two grounds to provide the best chance to get the pitch fit for the game.

In the case of Cup matches against non UCL teams, you must ensure the Fixture Director is informed **by telephone** on 07743 952081 of any postponements, as soon as possible and **no more than 30 minutes after the club is informed of the postponement.**

The Inspecting Referee

If the inspection is undertaken by someone other than the Match Referee, then prior to reaching a decision the Inspecting Referee must consult with the Match Referee prior to / during the inspection, if available, to mutually agree on a decision prior to notifying the home club's representative.

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

- Whether or not the ground (playing area) is dangerous (e.g., ice / frost).
- The views of the home club groundsman in terms of local knowledge and draining capabilities in the event of standing water.
- The existing condition of the playing surface in conjunction with the weather forecast
- The workforce available to the home club to complete any necessary work to make the ground playable.

In the event of fog check with the local weather authority regarding the likelihood of clearer conditions, also bearing in mind the visitors travel arrangements if the fog is known to be widespread.

If, after consultation with the match referee, the ground has been declared fit and the visiting Club instructed to travel, **then only in exceptional circumstances should the Match Referee reverse this decision.**

Timing of the Inspection

Unless explicitly notified by the League in advance, inspections for Saturday matches **MUST** take place on the day of the game, at a time that takes in to account the intended departure time of the opposition and match officials and the other factors outlined above. Midweek inspections can take place, if appropriate, up to 24 hours before the scheduled kick off time.

Failure to follow the above League Requirements may result in the Club being charged under League Rule 14.2.1, and in extreme cases Rule 8.39.