

Following the incident at Hornchurch where a hammer was thrown from the circle at 200m start. The hammer was hooked by the athlete and cleared the track striking a spectator after a bounce. The individual who was hit was thankfully not seriously hurt but the potential for death was high.

I personally have been lobbying UKA for around 8 years to get these dangerous cage constructions modified or removed to resemble more closely the IAAF standard cage.

Diane and I have been working closely with UKA over the last few weeks since the incident to provide a workable solution that satisfies the expectations of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The response by UKA has been measured in the light that they could have banned all hammer throwing until this issue is resolved. The risk assessment method may be quite difficult for some tracks to resolve but it is important that the coaches and athletes in the Hammer Circle provide guidance to their facility providers to allow the event to continue to be conducted safely.

The UKA cages with 4.2m from the centre of the circle to the mouth of the cage present the greatest risk to spectators especially at the 200m start and 100m finish. This is due to the far greater number of right handed throwers and the probability of an athlete hooking the hammer a significant distance outside of the sector (re the Hornchurch incident).

Below is a table that represents a safe operating envelope for 3 safety zones for the three standards of cages.

- The large IAAF standard cage provides the greatest level of safety for the event where the distance from the mouth of the cage to the centre of the circle is 7m.
- The next safest option is the UKA double circle cage where the hammer is thrown from the back circle. The standard construction is for the discus at the back of the cage and the hammer at the front. The safer option is to use the hammer inserts and throw from the discus circle at the back of the cage. Several tracks that I have attended lately have filled in the hammer circle such that it cannot be used. It may also be required to tie the cage back on the rear uprights to maintain the 3.5m from the centre of the cage to the net
- The least safe cage is the UKA cage option with the single circle (hammer Discus) with 4.2m from the centre of the circle to the mouth of the cage. This provides a significant risk to other athletes on the track and spectators outside the track when the safety zones cannot be maintained.

Safety distance outside sector with distance thrown

	IAAF 53deg	UKA 2 circle using rear circle 6.5m 62deg	UKA 4.2m 83deg
75m	11	16	27
70m	10.23	15	25.4
65m	9.5	14	23.5
60m	8.8	13	21.7
55m	8	12	19.9
50m	7.3	10.7	18
45m	6.6	9.7	16
40m	5.8	8.6	14.5
35m	5.1	7.5	12.6

Maintenance of the safety zones is the significant part of the risk assessment.

This can be mitigated by a number of options.

- Depending on location you may not need to consider left handed throwers. That is if there is a significant safety zone on the left hand sector looking from the cage into the field and left handed athletes are not using the cage.
- This may be difficult if the cage is used for competition. Options for competition would be to restrict access to athletes or spectators into an area where a hammer or discus could be thrown. If the hammer/discus is likely to land on the track within the restricted zone then a longer restricted safety area may be required to take into account the bounce of the hammer should it be hooked into the zone.
- Consideration with training /competition should be given to the standard of the athlete training / competing but allowance should be taken into account for an athlete picking up a lighter hammer. This will probably define a greater safety zone required.

I know this presents a significant risk to the event but as a coach, athlete and parent I could not stand back and see someone get killed due to my lack of action.

You can be assured that the Hammer Circle are working closely with UKA to ensure the event survives with a higher standard of safety.