

# Crowd Surfing – Who is at Risk?

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## Background:

Although crowd surfing is not a new activity, it is increasingly popular at music festivals. In the rest of the world, there has been concern over injuries and deaths at these events, but there is little documentation of injuries sustained in this manner in the UK<sup>1, 2</sup>.

## Definitions of Common Crowd Activities:

**Crowd surfing:** Involves launching oneself over the heads of the crowd in front, and 'surfing' on supporting hands towards the stage.

**Moshing:** Involves shoving and pushing people in the pit (at the front of the crowd).

**Stage diving:** Trusting the crowd implicitly, you climb onto the stage without security staff noticing, then launch yourself on top of the crowd

## Objectives:

Crowd surfing occurs frequently at popular music events, but little information is available on the level of care required for casualties of crowd surfing or the type of injuries they sustained.

The objectives of this study were to determine the incidence and types of injuries as a result of crowd surfing activity at a large music festival.

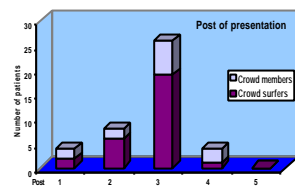
## Design & Setting:

This observational study was carried out at a three-day music festival, with over 60,000 attendances per day in August 2000

## Methods:

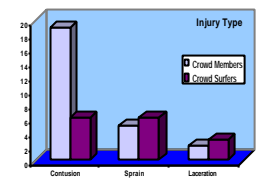
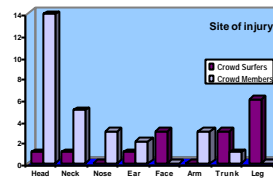
When patients attended (or were brought to) any of the medical or first aid bases, the circumstances of the injury were recorded.

Those injuries identified as related to crowd surfing, were highlighted and form the basis of this study. The patient record cards were examined for demographics, injury type and final diagnosis



## Location of Post

- First aid base
- Main medical base
- Main stage base
- Dance tent first aid base
- First aid base



## Results:

- A total of 1511 patients seen throughout the festival at all bases.
- There were 43 reported injuries related to crowd surfing activity over the 3 day period.
- Most crowd surfing related injuries occurred in front of the main stage, with eight patients (19%) presenting during one band's set.
- 60% of the injuries (26/43) were sustained by those in the crowd rather than the surfers themselves (17/43 (40%)).
- Two patients (5%) (one crowd surfer and one crowd member) were transferred to local A&E departments with suspected neck injuries. No bony injury was identified on radiographs, and both patients were discharged the same day.
- One crowd surfer was crushed in the crowd and was brought to the medical base hyperventilating but with no obvious injury.
- One of the security staff sustained an injury (shoulder) while assisting surfers over the stage barrier and is included in the numbers.
- Injuries to crowd members were predominantly to head and neck, the surfers also sustained lower limb injuries.
- The majority of injuries were contusions

Site of Injury Sustained by Crowd Surfers



Site of injuries Sustained by Crowd Members



## Discussion:

Provision of pre-hospital care at major crowd events is a significant undertaking. The addition of campsites at such events influences the number and type of casualties that present.

Good quality care on site is important, not only in direct patient care but also in preventing additional workload that would put excessive strain on the local hospitals and primary care services<sup>3</sup>.

At the three-day music festival studied, 60,000 people were in attendance each day with 30,000 camping each night.

The medical provision was provided along a major incident model complementing the recommendations made in the 'Purple Guide'<sup>4</sup>.

The observed injuries are of surprisingly low severity compared to published studies.

Distribution of injuries are as expected, with members of the crowd sustaining mainly head and neck injuries.

Although it may appear that a large number of the crowd were injured,

Although more injuries were seen in crowd members, they were only a small fraction of the crowd. It would appear that a proportionally larger number of surfers were injured.

A larger number of surfers were brought to the stage medical base by security staff at the stage barrier. The vast majority of these recovered their breath before details or full medical assessment were completed and returned to the crowd.

## Conclusion:

In contrast to published evidence, crowd surfing at this event seems to be relatively safe (certainly to the surfers!).

It is however a high volume activity and adequate medical and first aid care needs to be provided.

The majority of injuries sustained can be treated on site and relieve pressure on local healthcare facilities.

## References:

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