The 2012 London Olympics Case Study

After the UK won the bid to host the Olympic Games in 2005, a decision was made by the organising body to ensure that 2012 was the safest Olympics ever held. The 2004 Olympics in Athens had just recorded 14 fatalities during construction and the UK deemed this unacceptable. Through a variety of methods, the London Olympics ended up being the safest ever.

- An injury rate of 0.17 per 100,000 man-hours worked which is below the industry average of 0.55
- The first modern games with 0 fatalities
- Research found that 28% of construction workers were obese, 41% overweight and 29% had high blood pressure; all of these indicators lead to a greater risk of injury. A healthy breakfast of porridge was offered to every worker to help combat this

For the Olympic park, there were 5 major venues, 10 railway lines, 100 hectares of parkland, waterways, new infrastructure and residential properties that needed to be constructed. In total, this took 46,000 people around 77 million hours to deliver with over 75,000 companies involved in the process.
To ensure this could all be delivered safely, a Safety Health Environment Leadership team (SHEL) was created, combining experts involved in other projects such as Heathrow's new Terminal Five.

Safety Issues at Previous Games

It is estimated that around 14 people died during construction for the 2004 Athens Olympics, with workers forced into 14 hour days. Proper safety practices were not considered due to the time pressure to finish construction. At the Beijing Olympics in 2008, 10 people were killed with further estimated deaths from poor air quality.
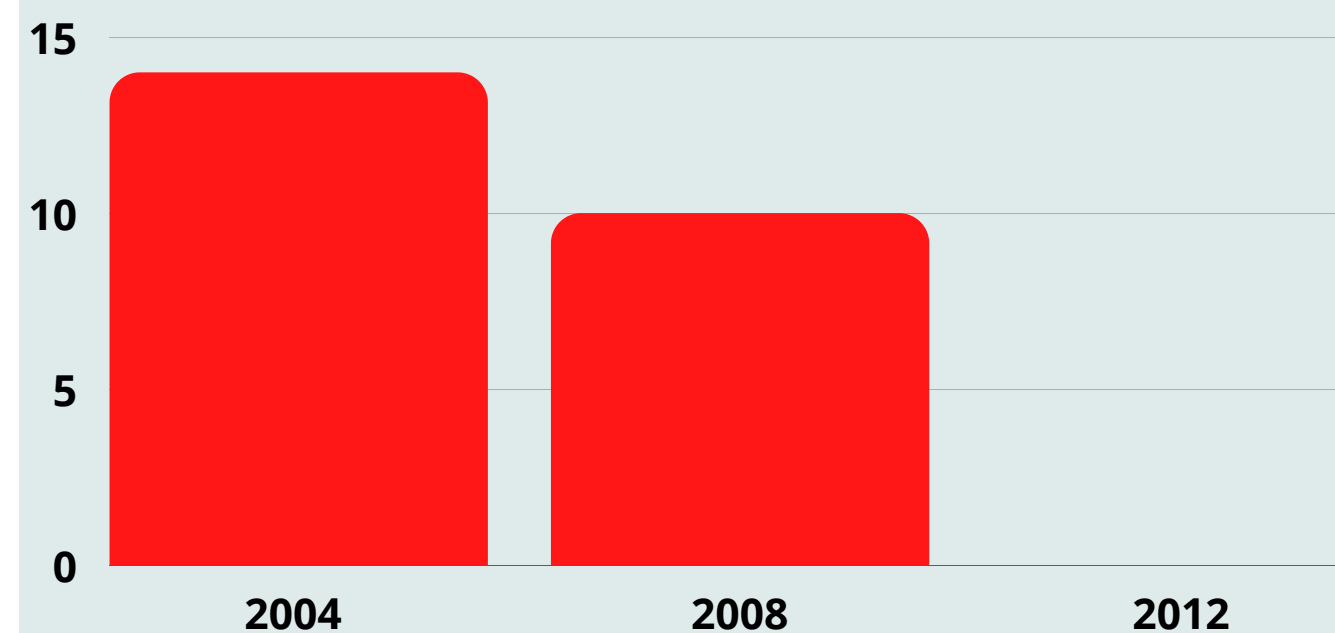
Responsible Project Management

The Olympic Games followed some of the driving principles of RPM, most notably transparency, uncertainty and engagement. By working with industry experts, promoting best practice and releasing regular reports, the Olympics were responsibly managed and the safety results from using this practice must now be adopted in the wider industry.
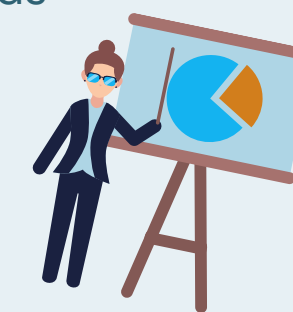
Fatalities During Olympic Construction

15		
10		
5		
0		
2004	**2008**	**2012**

Lessons to be learnt from 2012

- It is possible to have exemplary safety records with appropriate measures in place
- In order to be successful it is vital to use knowledge gained from previous projects
- Safety must be seen as part of the Project Management 'Iron Triangle'
- Budget restrictions are never an excuse for poor safety practices
- Health and Safety practices are not just about safety but about health and welfare too. Projects must consider individuals' personal and mental health
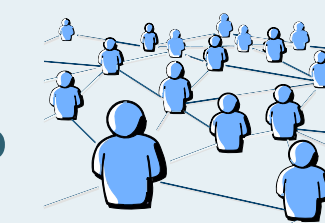
How was safety managed in 2012?

For the 2012 Olympics, the UK committed to the 'One in a Million' pledge which was to limit accidents to one for every million hours worked – something which had not previously been achieved at an Olympic games.
The UK government put together a safety panel consisting of industry experts to ensure safety was at the forefront of the project; the final results were record breaking amongst large scale construction projects.

Why has Safety not been considered properly before?

- Budget Restrictions – the need to keep costs down often leads to poor safety records
- Poor Communication – failure to communicate proper practices to all stakeholders leads to safety issues
- Lack of expertise – construction projects need to make use of industry experts whereas commonly experts are not used properly.
- Legal Responsibility – research has shown safety is not properly considered as companies do not understand their legal responsibility to ensure safety is managed.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

3 – Good Health and Well-Being
- Breakfast was given to employees to ensure better health and wellbeing on-site

9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrasturcture
- The Olympic Park aimed to provide a long-lasting legacy within London and the infrastructure built has greatly improved the local community

15 – Life on Land
- Over 100 hectares of parkland was created as part of the project in an area that was previously used as wasteland