

Event Safety and Security



Planning a special event is hard work and can seem like an overwhelming task. If you're like most people, then your priority is likely making sure that your attendees will have a good time. While bringing in engaging speakers and entertaining performers will keep guests engaged, they are not the only thing that you need to be concerned about. Proper event safety and security planning should be your number one priority.

Special events, such as sporting events, fairs, festivals, concerts, conferences, fundraisers, and exhibitions, draw in large crowds making them also potential targets for crimes such as theft, robbery, assault, and terrorism. Poor or inadequate event planning, management, crowd control, and security, and ineffective emergency response procedures, increase the likelihood of injuries, violence, and property damage.

Assess the Risks

Identifying the risks posed is the first step in ensuring the safety and security of your event. This initial risk assessment includes naming potential hazards that could occur at any point during the event. It's this dedicated effort focused on vulnerabilities or weaknesses that enable planners to better prepare.

Common hazards associated with events are:

- Damage to Property
- Unpredictable Weather
- Transport and Traffic Management
- Staff and Volunteer Safety
- EMS Assistance Requirements
- Fire Hazards
- Food Safety
- Crowd Management
- Aggressive Behavior

Law enforcement sources typically consider eight specific criteria in determining the likelihood that an event will be targeted for criminal or other undesirable activity. These include:

- 1) Size of the event
- 2) Specific existing threats to the event or location
- 3) Historical, political, or symbolic significance of the event
- 4) Duration of the event
- 5) Location
- 6) Cultural, political, and religious backgrounds of the patrons
- 7) Nature and extent of media coverage
- 8) Number and levels of dignitaries or VIPs attending

Pre-event Planning

Pre-event planning should begin as soon as possible and should be well on its way long before the date of the event. Planning far before the event allows adequate time to identify and understand potential threats to your event as well as time to coordinate with other key members to improve your outcome. Key members that should be included in this process include:

- Private security firms
- Law enforcement
- Fire Departments
- Emergency Medical services
- Transportation Departments
- Health and Public Agencies
- Vendors and Businesses that will be participating in the event

Develop a command structure prior to your event to allow identified personnel to decide if the event should be momentarily suspended, canceled, or evacuated to shelters or other protected areas.

Leadership and Coordination

Clearly defined leadership is a critical component when dealing with large-scale events. Events often bring together multiple organizations, which can easily cause problems if not properly managed. The designated responsibilities and channels of communication need to be set up between all involved parties—as well as their role in the event of an emergency—before the event takes place.

Security Workforce

When planning for a special event, it is critical that you consider how much security will be needed, as well as how many guards will be needed to keep order at your event. Private

security firms are often used to provide an adequate number of qualified security personnel. If staffing questions arise, it may be prudent to obtain the opinion of your local law enforcement agency to ensure adequate resources are being deployed.

Keep in mind that when deciding on the number of security personnel needed to keep your event safe it is best to have more than you need. Presenting a significant show of force can help deter problems before they become an issue.

Communications

Communication is another major part of event safety and security. The ability to respond quickly to evolving and differing issues throughout your event can make the difference between a mild or major incident. Your communication systems should allow for Immediate, comprehensive, and cross-disciplinary communication before, during, and after the event.

Access Control: Screening and Physical Security

Access control is an integral part of event planning that can help to improve security, manage crowds, and keep track of attendees. Various access control options are available, and most events should have varying levels of security. This enables you to restrict access to sensitive areas of the event to only those individuals who need to be present.



Guidelines should be set up that outline specific items that are prohibited at the event such as:

- Weapons (firearms, knives, scissors, Tasers)
- Alcohol/Drugs (Including legal)
- Bottles
- Coolers, grills, large bags, etc.

Crowd Control

Gathering a large crowd for your event is a great thing and can really contribute to the overall success of your event. However, large groups together in one space can allow things to get out of hand quickly without proper crowd management. Inadequate crowd controls often contribute to injuries from slips, trips and falls, altercations, and children being separated from their parents.

Key areas of crowd management to consider:

- Designate specific lanes of entry and exit for attendees
- Install clear signs for directions

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- Identify and address potential congestion areas
- Train staff to monitor density and direct patrons away from heavily crowded areas
- Paths of travel for access to and egress from the event
- Plan how patrons will move from one activity to another during the event
- Develop one-way traffic patterns

All access points, egress areas, and travel paths should be well-defined, smooth, and free of trip, slip, and fall hazards. Utilize fencing, barricades, ropes, stanchions, or uniformed security staff to help control travel paths. Incorporating these tools into your plan will also help in dealing with areas that may present a hazard such as uneven walking surfaces, wet areas, trip hazards, equipment, restricted areas, or other concerns.

Transportation / Traffic

Developing a strong and effective traffic management plan can help ensure the safety and health of your staff and patrons. Map out how traffic will flow into and out of the venue's designated parking areas. Consider parking areas as not every venue will have clearly marked spots. Use flags, cones, or other markers to designate parking spots. Assign staff or volunteers to help guide guests into spots if it's not immediately clear where to park and provide them with personal safety equipment like vests and flashlights. Include paths of travel for service vehicles in your plan as well such as security carts and vendors. Work with your local traffic engineering group as well as fire/EMS, and others to ensure all factors have been included. This may lead to decisions to close streets or reroute traffic patterns.

Surveillance and Observation

Security cameras are a great tool to consider when planning for an event. Cameras and signage provide a number of benefits and can aid in defense against claims.

Benefits of security cameras for event security and safety:

- Monitor traffic flow
- Enhance security
- Deter crime and theft
- Monitor real-time scenarios
- Monitor the movement of key personnel

In addition to using video cameras, many law enforcement agencies position officers on rooftops or other high vantage points to observe crowd behavior during special events.

Emergency Services

Police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) play a critical role in supporting security and public safety at special events. Work with local services to understand the resources they can provide and the needs of your event. Remember to also consider the local hospital or medical facility in your area.

Emergency resources will likely have specific needs for any events that you will need to accommodate.

Staging areas for equipment and vehicles, and

access to critical components such as fire hydrants, sprinkler systems, utility panels, emergency lighting, and entry-exit routes are often required. Hospitals and public health agencies should be included in the planning sessions to aid them in preparation for situations that may impact the community.



Physical Inspections

A physical site inspection should be conducted of all event areas prior to the event to identify and correct any safety hazards that could impact the event or patrons. Regular inspections and maintenance should be scheduled throughout the event to ensure all areas are kept clean and serviceable. Qualified personnel should be assigned to inspect and conduct maintenance on any special equipment such as stages, lighting, audio, food service equipment, etc.

All temporary structures must be designed and erected to include a margin for safety and a view to potential hazards. A local government building codes inspector should supervise the erection of temporary structures and ensure that they conform to local government building or engineering specifications.

Severe Weather

Weather is unpredictable and with a quickly changing climate, time-sensitive emergency management plays a large role in ensuring the safety and security of both employees and a business' infrastructure. Even if a business or organization is not in a region affected by severe weather, customers, partners, or vendors may still be affected. That's why it is important to have a plan in place to anticipate those impacts.

Windstorms, heat waves, tornadoes, rain, hail, or lightning can dramatically affect outdoor events. To help reduce the impacts of weather on operations, procedures should be put in place to monitor the weather and a contingency plan that addresses protective actions should be developed.

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Event Safety and Security Resources:

Department of Justice

- [Planning And Managing Security For Major Special Events:](#)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- [Special Events Contingency Planning](#)

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

- [Mass Gathering Security Planning Tool](#)

For additional information contact:

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