Chapter 1: Pre-Event Planning

INTRODUCTION

Planning any event is difficult. Planning for the potential risks and hazards associated with an event is even more difficult but essential to the event's success. If you want those who attend an event to have positive memories of it, you need to keep several things in mind. This chapter covers the issues that you should address in the very early stages of planning or even when you are discussing promoting or sponsoring such an event. Before you schedule the event, you should consider the scope of the event or mass gathering, the risks to spectators and participants, community impact, and the emergency support required (personnel and logistics). You should also identify the lead agency and members of the planning team.

DEFINITION OF SPECIAL EVENT AND MASS GATHERING

What does or does not constitute a special event or mass gathering is difficult to determine. Instead, guidelines may be used to define it.

A focus group discussing special events and mass gatherings has identified a special event as:

> **a non-routine activity within a community that brings together a large number of people. Emphasis is not placed on the total number of people attending but rather the impact on the community's ability to respond to a large-scale emergency or disaster or the exceptional demands that the activity places on response services. A community's special event requires additional planning, preparedness, and mitigation efforts of local emergency response and public safety agencies.**

The focus group then defined a mass gathering as a subset of a special event. Mass gatherings are usually found at special events that attract large numbers of spectators or participants. Both special events and mass gatherings require the kind of additional planning identified in the previous quote. For example, an amusement park that attracts a large number of people is not considered a special event because large crowds are expected. A mass gathering does not imply that the event is a special event. Failure to prepare for all contingencies can lead to disastrous consequences.

This manual is not intended to offer preparation planning for large national events, but for the more traditional community events, such as parades, fairs, concerts, air shows, and festivals. Both types of events require the same kind of careful planning, however.

The title of this manual is **Special Events Contingency Planning**. What do we mean by contingency planning and where do we start? What distinguishes this level of planning from traditional public safety planning?

DEFINITION OF SPECIAL EVENT AND MASS GATHERING (CONTINUED)

The first concern with contingency planning is to identify times when the event may place strains on the existing public safety agencies. Even in the earliest stages of planning, you should begin also to make contingency plans. These plans should consider licensing and regulations, emergency response issues, identifying persons responsible for particular types of hazards and risks, resources and expenses, and jurisdictions. Planning ahead reduces stress for organizers and promoters during the event, if an incident occurs that requires public agencies to work together.

During the initial planning stages, each agency should review resources to ensure that all necessary equipment is available. If the agencies determine that any additional equipment is needed, then they may acquire the equipment or supplies and be ready for the event. One way for communities to acquire equipment is to work together or pool equipment.

One way in which agencies work together is by adopting a program known as local mutual aid. This program allows neighboring communities to pool resources and share liability for damages or loss of equipment. If one community needs a particular piece of equipment, it may borrow it from a neighboring community. The equipment will become an asset of the borrowing community and will be covered under their insurance until it is released and returns to its home organization. It is important that those involved in planning the event know the agreements established between neighboring communities and the assets that are available to assist in responding to any unforeseen incidents. These agreements may all already be established and included as a part of the local emergency operations plan.

PLANNING MEETINGS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS/MASS GATHERINGS

PLANNING TEAM IDENTIFICATION

In general, planning a special event or mass gathering should begin well in advance of the event. One of the first steps in planning an event is to bring together those who are hosting the event with those who are responsible for the public safety within the community. A multidisciplinary planning team or committee should be composed of the promoter or sponsor and any agency that holds a functional stake in the event (e.g., emergency management, law enforcement, fire and rescue, public works/utilities, public health, etc.). With all of these agencies present, there is an obvious risk of confusion in matters of leadership. Thus, the lead agency should be identified early in the planning process. In some communities, the lead agency for public safety planning is the emergency management agency. Consequently, the emergency management agency should typically lead the way in coordinating the event planning effort.

Some communities already have planning protocols or systems in place. If your community has an existing plan that has already proved successful, do not start from scratch; simply change or modify the plan where needed. The ICS is a management system that is frequently used to manage large events effectively. As such, event planners should consider using ICS throughout the planning process. It seems logical that the Incident Commander should be a representative of the lead agency. It also seems logical that this representative should lead the planning team or committee.

PLANNING TEAM IDENTIFICATION (CONTINUED)

All involved agencies need to participate on this planning team from the outset to ensure a successful and safe event. At its initial meeting, the planning team should develop its mission and objectives, and determine the necessary components of the public safety plan. For example, what elements are within the realm of the promoter and what are within the realm of the public safety agencies? The planning team should also develop its structure using ICS as a model (that is, Sections, Branches, Divisions, and Groups, as needed). Additionally, the planning team should consider the promoter's or sponsoring organization's purpose and experience, potential event-related risks (including crowd control, staffing, food and shelter, parking, transportation, medical facilities), previous event concerns, relevant local concerns, weather, and community impact.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

TEAM APPROACH

Special event contingency plan development should be the joint effort of a planning team—a group of people who represent a cross-section of the organizations that are involved in the emergency response effort. Although each jurisdiction's team will vary somewhat, the Emergency Manager usually serves as the team's planning coordinator. Team members may include representatives of the groups listed below:

- Office of the Chief Executive.
- Promoter/Sponsor.
- Emergency services agencies (law enforcement, fire/rescue, emergency medical services, public health and safety, and others).
- Planning agencies and individuals (for example, community development, city planning commissions, and hazard mitigation planner).
- Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs), for hazardous materials information.
- Public works agencies and utility companies.
- Social service agencies and volunteer organizations (including the American Red Cross and Salvation Army).
- Medical community representatives (for example, area hospitals, EMS agencies, medical examiner, coroner, mortician).
- Key education personnel (including administrators).
- Communications representatives (Public Information Officer (PIO), local media, radio/CB groups, and others).
- Aviation and coastal authorities (including State aviation authority, other air support representatives, port authorities, U.S. Coast Guard station).
- Chief Financial Officer (CFO), auditor, and heads of any centralized procurement and resource support agencies.
- The jurisdiction's legal counsel.
- Industrial and military installations in the area.
- Labor and professional organizations.
- Animal care and control organizations.
- Emergency Managers and agency representatives from neighboring jurisdictions, to coordinate mutual aid needs.

TEAM APPROACH (CONTINUED)

- State and/or Federal representatives, as appropriate.
- Representatives of private-sector organizations, as necessary.

A team approach to planning offers many advantages, including:

A Sense of Ownership – The plan is more likely to be used and followed if the tasked organizations have a sense that the plan is "theirs."

Greater Resources – More knowledge and expertise are brought to bear on the planning effort when more people are involved.

Cooperative Relationships – Closer professional relationships that are developed during the planning process should translate into better cooperation and coordination in emergencies.

STATE AND FEDERAL ROLES IN TERRORISM INCIDENT PREVENTION

An integrated approach among the local, State, and Federal Government provides for a logical clearinghouse for intelligence on the movement and activities of terrorist groups and the collection, interpretation, and dissemination of that information to the proper enforcement agencies. Effective planning and intelligence gathering can lessen the likelihood of a surprise emergency incident, which, improperly handled, can make or break a department and its administrators at all levels of government. Descriptive intelligence with predictive interpretation that forecasts the probability of the threat and the target can enhance operational readiness in training, equipping, and practicing to respond to emergency incidents. In gathering intelligence, law enforcement agencies must consider threat assessment, as a minimum measure. Planners must have appropriate contacts and phone numbers at hand before the event.

State law enforcement agencies should take the lead in pre-incident threat forecasting and planning. Roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholding agencies for the event need to be determined and an incident chain of command put in place, so that, if a terrorist threat materializes, confusion and duplication of response can be diminished.

PRE-EVENT PLANNING MATRIX

At subsequent meetings, the planning team should identify all of the major functions and responsibilities required by the event and assign appropriate agencies to manage each function or responsibility. Because responsibilities vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, it is most effective to assign responsibilities consistently to avoid duplication and promote efficient response to problems that may arise. The Pre-Event Planning Matrix is designed to help you choose the risks, hazards, or functions that are likely to be required by an event, and assign each to a primary agency (P) or a secondary or support agency (S). The functions and responsibility assignments must be discussed and decided in the planning stages, not when an incident occurs. This Pre-Event Planning Matrix is included on pages A-1 through A-3 of Appendix A: Job Aids. A Special Event Planning Checklist is included on pages A-4 through A-8 of Appendix A: Job Aids.

PROMOTER/SPONSOR(S)

The promoter or sponsor must be involved in all of the planning phases to ensure a successful event. Often, the promoter is interested in monetary gain more than he or she is interested in public safety. If this appears to be his or her primary goal, local agency participation is essential. You may encourage the promoter to cooperate by linking attendance at planning meetings with the permit process and issuance. For example, the permit to host the event may require the promoter's presence at the initial planning meeting. Teamwork promotes successful events.

One way to ensure public safety at an event is to follow the relevant laws or regulations of the community. Following these laws and regulations ensures that the promoter will keep the public's safety at the forefront of all plans. Some communities or States have public agency regulatory oversight of the promoter built into the permit process. For example, the community may have a requirement for the promoter to have adequate contingency plans in place before approving an event.

A Promoter/Sponsor Checklist is included on pages A-9 through A-21 of Appendix A: Job Aids.

RELEVANT LAWS OR REGULATIONS

Event promoters must usually gain approval from local, and sometimes even State, authorities to hold public events. The following information should be available to the promoters before beginning the permit-approval process:

- Identity of the approving authority and any other authorities actively involved in the approval process.
- Relevant statutes, ordinances, codes, and standards (i.e., life safety codes) existing for mass gatherings.
- Documentation required to support their application.
- Insurance, bond, liability issues.
- Relevant deadlines for the filing of applications.

Some communities offer a "One Stop Shopping" concept for permitting. The person requesting a permit for an event completes applications at one place and the information is forwarded to the appropriate agencies for their approval. The person requesting the permit does not have to track down the appropriate agencies to make a request. This concept also ensures that all required agencies are notified and considerations are made before the permit is issued.

Promoters should be aware of the approving authority's timetable for approving events and issuing permits and should include any potential delay in the event planning schedule.

As a condition for receiving approval, promoters may be required to provide feedback on the approval process and submit an evaluation before, during, and after the event, as needed. Promoters may be required to give feedback in the form of a debrief or a report to relevant authorities.

An Approving Authority Checklist is included on pages A-22 through A-32 of Appendix A: Job Aids.

LEGAL ISSUES

Some form of legislation usually governs or restricts public events or aspects of them. Some events, particularly extremely large or high-impact events, require special State or local legislation. Local ordinances provide health and medical guidelines.

Promoters should consider obtaining legal advice early in the planning stage. Items that warrant consideration include:

- Liability for injuries.
- Liability for acts or omissions.
- Liability for financial obligations incurred in responding to major emergencies occasioned by the event.
- Potential liability for the resultant effects of the event on normal emergency operations.

Permits may be required for parades, the sale and consumption of alcohol, pyrotechnics, and the sale of food items. Fire safety inspections should be required. Permission may also be required if it will be necessary to close certain adjacent or peripheral roads or streets. A permit may be required for the mass gathering itself.

Most public sector agencies have adopted a "User Pays" policy for services provided at sporting and entertainment events. The purpose of this policy is to improve the allocation of statute resources in the general community by providing a means of charging for services deployed to plan for, and respond to, sporting and entertainment events. Event promoters should consult local and State authorities to determine relevant fee structures and charges for services provided, including payment of overtime costs for personnel.

Promoters may be required to post a bond or provide liability insurance to cover the costs of response to emergencies, subsequent venue cleanup, traffic and crowd control, and other policing functions.

The head of the planning team must monitor the progress that is made in satisfying all legal requirements throughout the planning stage of the event.

In addition, research should be done in advance to determine statutory authority and emergency powers (i.e., isolation/quarantine, emergency evacuation, etc.) of the various parties involved.

POLITICAL ISSUES

Often communities have to deal with local political considerations when they plan events. No specific advice can be given to the promoter except to warn him or her that political considerations are always important to the local community. Often a way to encourage elected political officials to support an event is to show the monetary or quality-of-life impact that a successful event would have on their communities or careers. Explaining the positive impact encourages officials to support the public safety coordinators by providing adequate local resources and funding.

POLITICAL ISSUES (CONTINUED)

Any event has the potential to become an incident requiring coordination and support as described in the National Response Framework (NRF). Recent revisions to Federal guidance documents indicate that any number of factors could escalate a local incident to an incident of national significance. Local planners must also be prepared to deal with a rapid transition of their incident to an incident of national significance.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Special events often bring attention and significant economic benefits and opportunities to local communities. These could include an influx of revenue into the local community, such as the hotel and restaurant industry.

Local event planners must not sacrifice public safety for the sake of economic benefit. Certain businesses in a community may be adversely affected by certain requirements of the special event, such as closing streets in a commercial area or increased traffic in residential areas. Additional staffing may be required to ensure that service calls by local emergency services agencies are not hampered.

ATTENDEE/CROWD ISSUES

1. **Crowds are complex social structures.**

   Crowd roles:

   - Active Core: carry out action of crowd.
   - Cheerleaders: provide oral support for leaders.
   - Observers: follow actions but rarely take part.

   Significance of crowds:

   - Increase the probability of a dangerous occurrence.
   - Increase the potential number of victims.
   - Make communication slower and more difficult.
   - Make changes in action slower and more difficult.
   - Diffuse responsibility (someone else will do it).

2. **Panics and Crazes**

   Panic in a group is the flight from a real or perceived threat from which escape appears to be the only effective response. What appears to be panic is usually the result of poor inputs (especially communications or the lack of) and previous knowledge and experience.

   Craze in a group is the temporary, short-lived competitive rush by a group toward some attractive object. A craze tends to occur on entering an event, and may be exacerbated by the lack of information.

Attendee/Crowd Issues (Continued)

3. Deindividualization

Deindividualization is defined as a loss of self-awareness and evaluation apprehension in group situations that foster anonymity. Behavior may include:

- Mild lessening of restraint (e.g., screaming during a concert).
- Impulsive self-gratification (e.g., theft, vandalism, molestation).
- Destructive social explosions (e.g., group violence, rioting and torturing).

4. Defusing

The tedium that may be created by waiting and/or by the perception that other gates are being opened first, or later arrivals are being admitted first can create problems. Such things as appropriate music, the use of humor, food and beverage services moving through the group, cheerful security staff moving through the group, and good communication that includes a public address system, can help defuse the situation.

CRITICAL CROWD DENSITIES

The objective should be to prevent the build-up of large accumulations of patrons, particularly within short time periods, in confined spaces—especially if they are frustrated by the inability to see what is happening.

A study by Fruin (1981) identifies critical crowd densities as a common characteristic of crowd disasters. Critical crowd densities are approached when the floor space per standing person is reduced to about 5.38 square feet.

Considering the various movements or the positions that spectators will occupy, approximate minimal mobility requirements have been empirically identified by Fruin (1981) as follows:

- Pedestrians moving in a stream require average areas of 24.73 square feet per person to attain normal walking speed, and to pass and avoid others.
- At 10 square feet per person, walking becomes significantly restricted, and speeds noticeably reduced.
- At 4.95 square feet per person, the maximum capacity of a corridor or walkway is attained with movement at a shuffling gait and movement possible only as a group. This would be characteristic of a group exiting a stadium or theater.
- At less than 4.95 square feet per person average, individual pedestrian mobility becomes increasingly restricted.
- At approximately 3 square feet per person, involuntary contact and brushing against others occurs. This is a behavioral threshold generally avoided by the public, except in crowded elevators and buses.
- Below 2 square feet per person, potentially dangerous crowd forces and psychological pressures begin to develop.

Fruin (1981) contends that "the combined pressure of massed pedestrians and shock-wave effects that run through crowds at critical density levels produce forces which are impossible for individuals, even small groups of individuals, to resist."

The above information shows that you may need to provide a monitoring system, such as closed circuit television monitoring of crowd movements, that will provide warning to event personnel that they must take necessary action to prevent a major incident.

CROWD THROUGHPUT CAPACITIES

In his writings on crowd disasters, Fruin (1981) identifies several areas regarding spectator throughput in entry to a performance. For planning purposes, he suggests:

1. **Ticket Collectors**
   Ticket collectors must be in a staff uniform or otherwise identifiable. Ticket collectors faced with a constant line can throughput a maximum of:

   - One patron per second per portal in a simple pass-through situation.
   - Two seconds per patron if the ticket must be torn and stub handed to the patron.

   More complicated ticketing procedures (and/or answering the occasional question) will protract time per patron.

2. **Doorways**

   A free-swinging door, open portal, or gate can accommodate up to one person per second with a constant queue.

   Revolving doors and turnstiles would allow half this rate of throughput, or less.

3. **Corridors, Walkways, Ramps**
   Have a maximum pedestrian traffic capacity of approximately 25 persons per minute per 1 foot of clear width, in dense crowds.

4. **Stairs**
   Have a maximum practical traffic capacity of approximately 16 persons per minute in the upward direction. Narrow stairs (less than 5 feet) will lower the maximum flow.

5. **Escalators and Moving Walkways**
   A standard 3.94-ft. wide escalator or moving walkway, operating at 118 feet per minute can carry 100 persons per minute under a constant queue.

EVENT CANCELLATION OR POSTPONEMENT

From time to time, an event may need to be canceled, postponed, or interrupted. If a crowd has already gathered, these actions have the potential to create dangerous crowd reactions. Have plans in place to manage an angry crowd appropriately and to address the possible readmission of patrons to the venue.

One major aspect to consider is authority to cancel or postpone an event. During the planning phase, the promoter and the planning team must discuss who has the authority to cancel or postpone an event as well as when and under what conditions the event can be postponed or canceled. These decisions must be made before the event begins, and everyone must know who has the authority. ICS is an excellent tool to ensure chain of command, communications, and proper approving authority.

Venue/Site

You may need to consider a number of alternative venues for an event. Emergency managers may be able to recommend appropriate venues based on health and safety considerations.

Finding a suitable venue or set of venues can be difficult. Answering the following questions during the planning stage can aid in the selection of an appropriate event site:

- Will staging the event require multiple venues?
- Is this kind of event normally conducted at a fixed facility?
- Will a fixed facility be used in ways that may not be considered normal for that facility?
- Is the event regularly conducted at a temporary venue?
- Is the event a "one-of-a-kind" project at a temporary venue?
- What services and utilities are available at the venue?
- What additional services and utilities will be required at the venue?
- Is there a need for backup services or utilities (i.e., redundant systems)?

Venue/Site (Continued)

A universal map/grid referencing system for the entire event footprint should be developed in advance for all attendees and event staff (including public safety personnel) to allow for the rapid identification of event-specific facilities and other locations in an emergency.

▪   What shelter facilities are available at the following locations:

  ▪   Transport pick-up and drop-off areas?
  ▪   Spectator and official viewing areas?
  ▪   Seated eating areas?
  ▪   Pedestrian thoroughfares?
  ▪   First aid and medical centers?
  ▪   Competitors' and officials' marshaling areas?

  •   What is the duration of the event, and will it continue during the hours of darkness?
▪   Have you provided for the needs of people with disabilities?
▪   Does the date of the event conflict with other events to be conducted in the area?
▪   Will seasonal weather require any special contingency planning?
▪   Have you surveyed the proposed site (particularly outdoor sites) for inherent hazards associated with the location, and have any been identified? Do utility lines that could be brought down by a severe storm traverse the site? Is the site adjacent to a waterway prone to flooding?
▪   Is the site layout such that, in the event of a mass casualty incident, space is available for an onsite triage area to permit stabilizing medical treatment before critical patients are transported to local health care facilities? Is such an area accessible to ambulances to eliminate the need for carrying patients long distances?
▪   Does the site allow for mass decontamination considerations?
▪   Have site emergency evacuation considerations been addressed?
▪   Does the site allow for adequate crowd regulation by means of, for example, existing regimented seating areas or flow barriers?
▪   Are spectator overflow areas available to prevent crowd crush if spectator turnout significantly exceeds expectations, a common phenomenon at rock concerts?
▪   In an urban setting, as is characteristic of a stadium venue, could the adjacent streets on all sides be closed to other than emergency service, and resident vehicles, creating a perimeter for access as well as a buffer zone?
▪   Is a staging area for protestors necessary? Is it required?

Criminal and Terrorist Risks

Special events and mass gatherings are a perfect target because of the large number of people, media coverage, and the high-profile impact if a terrorist strikes. Small communities and their events may actually be attractive sites for terrorists because the residents may believe they are not at risk and so do not prepare themselves. However, event planners can take steps to prepare for the same risks that all communities face.

Prepare public safety personnel to protect themselves. Ensure that your community's public safety personnel are adequately trained and equipped with personal protective equipment (PPE) as dictated by their response role to protect themselves as they help others.

Criminal and Terrorist Risks (Continued)

Some events may appeal to terrorists for a number of reasons, including an anniversary date, religious holiday, a particular location, the nature of the event, or those who will be included among the participants. Communities can identify terrorist organizations that may be attracted to their event for any number of reasons and can prepare accordingly. Knowledge is an advantage. Know the possible risks that the event poses and the audience that the event will attract. Ensure that your public safety teams are prepared and have practiced their response to both terrorism and suspected terrorism, and that they understand how to mitigate any potential terrorist incidents.

Every jurisdiction in the country has conducted a jurisdiction threat and vulnerability assessment, which was required by the Federal Government as part of the national homeland security preparedness effort. When event planners formulate contingency plans for special events, they should work together with State and Federal partners and ensure that State and local data from these Federally mandated assessments are reviewed. Local law enforcement professionals should consult the FBI and State law enforcement intelligence specialists on current threat and vulnerability data as part of the event planning process. The current Homeland Security Advisory System threat level should be considered, and event planners should prepare for contingencies if the Federal threat level changes during the event.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

Planning and intelligence gathering are necessary activities for law enforcement personnel during event planning. The level of commitment to these anti-terrorist activities influences the level of response capabilities that should be maintained.

Two terms that event planners should understand are anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism:

- Anti-terrorism is a term used to define actions taken to mitigate potential effects of terrorist activity.
- Counter-terrorism is best defined as operational actions taken or activities planned to prevent a terrorist activity or event.

TARGETS

Most targets singled out by terrorist groups fall into one of eleven critical infrastructure areas or five key asset areas:

Critical Infrastructure

- Agriculture/food supplies
- Water
- Public health systems
- Emergency services (police, fire, EMS)
- Military targets/defense industry
- Cyber-terrorism and information
- Energy infrastructure
- Transportation infrastructure
- Banking/Finance
- Chemical and hazardous materials
- Postal/shipping facilities

Key Assets

- Monuments or public icons
- Nuclear power plants
- Dams
- Government facilities
- Other commercial key assets

MOTIVES

The motives of extremist groups can generally be identified as:

- Political
- Religious
- Racial
- Environmental
- Special interest

WEAKNESSES IN MEASURING THREAT

Terrorist threats are often difficult to measure because they are:

- Dynamic
- Mobile
- Difficult to recognize (lone offenders, splinter groups)
- Dependent upon the ease and availability of creating a WMD device
- Difficult to quantify, or subjective (open to interpretation, with a tendency toward inflating results)

WEAKNESSES IN MEASURING THREAT (CONTINUED)

The dangers of information sharing (outside of those who have a "need to know") also make it difficult to measure the extent of the threat because unauthorized disclosure of information may:

- Lead to the violation of operational security.
- Create unnecessary panic.
- Produce unintended media attention.

CONTEMPORARY TERRORISM

In the past, we wanted to believe that terrorism was something that happened outside of the United States. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. The FBI has determined that contemporary terrorists have generally:

- Been politically motivated.
- Sought and used publicity to gain recognition and public sentiment.
- Most often viewed, trained, and equipped themselves as an army at war.
- Sought to cross jurisdictional lines to further confound law enforcement detection and apprehension.
- Had the support and funding of national governments from outside of the United States.
- Invited public scrutiny to put law enforcement on trial by the effective use of the media.