

# Special Event Security Planning & Management

Security Best Practices for All Levels of Government,  
Education & Corporate Events

Checklists, Templates, Lessons-learned



Written by  
Branch Walton & Don Philpott



Government Training Inc.™

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## **Acknowledgement**

This book is the result of interviews with many law enforcement officers, and safety and security professionals. It has also drawn from many public domain sources, including the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, FEMA, Department of Health and Human Services, and Centers for Disease Control, Secret Service and numerous law enforcement agencies. Much of the information follows guidance given by the National Response Plan, National Incident Management System and from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services report, Planning And Managing Security For Major Special Events: Guidelines for Law Enforcement.

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Henley-Putnam University was conceived after more than 12 years of planning and research to contribute to the professional development of protection, intelligence and counterterrorism tradecraft. The founders designed the University to meet the strategic security industry's establishment of higher educational standards – and in keeping with this design, brought on board only faculty with real-world experience in their respective fields. Today, Henley-Putnam University is a premier university for higher education in the advancing fields of protection, intelligence and counterterrorism.

The mission is to serve professionals in the strategic security industry, especially within the law enforcement, military and the intelligence community, by increasing their opportunities for advancement in the fields of intelligence management, counterterrorism studies, and strategic security and protection management. Its focus is on delivering user-friendly, high-quality, online programs with an emphasis on furthering knowledge in deterrence and prevention.

## Symbols

Throughout this book you will see a number of icons displayed. The icons are there to help you as you work through the Seven Step process. Each icon acts as an advisory – for instance alerting you to things that you must always do or should never do. The icons used are:



This is something that you must always do



This is something you should never do



Really useful tips



Points to bear in mind



Have you checked off or answered everything on this list?



## STEP 1

# Introduction



Major special events are typically of regional and national importance requiring the input and assistance of multiple agencies. These larger events, which often include a variety of VIPs and political figures, are also potential targets for terrorists, criminals, and protestors. These events require extensive planning, elaborate communication at many levels, and a comprehensive approach.

Terrorists used to go for hard targets – government buildings, military personnel and the like – but that is no longer the case. We have seen Chechen terrorists take hostages in a Russian school with deadly results. Packed trains have been bombed in Pakistan, and terrorists attacked Mumbai’s main hotel and business district leaving 472 civilians killed or wounded.



### Remember

However, the practices involved in planning and managing major events are the same as those needed for managing smaller events whether it is a state fair, local community celebration or a downtown parade. What might differ is the security measures needed. A rock concert with 10,000 fans is likely to need a lot more security personnel than an evangelical prayer meeting of 100,000 worshippers.

Documents captured both in the U.S. and overseas show that the terrorists regard any target as a legitimate one, and a crowded public event would certainly allow them to kill and maim as many people as possible. That is why constant vigilance is of paramount importance and why event staff, especially security personnel must be trained to be the eyes and ears of both the law enforcement and intelligence community. Never ever assume “it won’t happen to me.” It might, and you must be prepared if it does.

## What is a Special Event?

A special event is considered to be, although not limited to, a parade, walk, run, bike ride, procession, funeral procession for a VIP, or festival, requiring the temporary use of public space that requires changing, restricting, or adapting the normal and usual regulations or controls of such space held open for use by the general public, but not including sidewalks and parks, for activities of a recreational, entertainment, amusement, educational, or civic nature, and subject to the special event user fees for permits and licenses and to cover the costs of providing police, fire, and other public services that are necessary to protect public health and safety.



### Remember

The more time you have to plan an event, the better your organization of it will be and the more warning you can give to local, state or federal authorities, police and other essential services.

Activities protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, including assemblages organized to consult for the common good, petition the government, exercise worship or religion, or demonstrate as a public display of sentiment for or against a person or cause for the purposes of speech making or address generally do not require approval, although the appropriate authorities should be given adequate notice of your intentions.

For instance, the Division of Park Programs, located in the National Capital Region Headquarters building, issues approximately 4,000 permits per year, including those for public gatherings (special events and demonstrations), and filming and photography. The permit system is intended to help ensure, to the extent possible, that the multitude of activities that may be taking place on any given day will not conflict with each other or with general visitor activities. That should be the aim of all event organizers.

## Planning

In developing a plan for a special event, several factors should be considered by the event organizer. These are just a few suggestions to be considered in planning an event. Experience has shown that consideration of these elements, and careful preparation, are significant factors in increasing the success of an event.

## General Requirements

### Access

People attending the event must be able to access and exit the event safely. Adequate parking must be available. Provision must be made for access to the site by emergency service vehicles. The identified route should not conflict with the routes the public would use to get in and out. Emergency service vehicles prefer a one-way system that allows their vehicles on the site and leave without having to turn around.

## Alcohol

Licenses have to be obtained if alcohol is being served, and staff needs to be instructed on who to serve and who not to serve – not only based on age but also on level of intoxication. Security needs to be available to quickly respond to any problems. Alcohol is often the major cause of problems at events. The organizers of an event may also be liable for any incidents that occur following the event (a vehicle crash for instance) if it can be shown that those involved were under the influence of alcohol when they left the event.

## Ambulances

If paramedics are on duty there will likely be a charge for their attendance. Most have a minimum three-hour-on-duty charge, but check with your local fire department.



### Must Do

At any event, an effective means of communication is imperative to co-ordinate the activities of the officials.

Communications are an important element in sound logistical planning. This can include portable radios, cellular telephones, and adequate public address systems. Use of such equipment is dependent upon crowd size, routes, and geographical terrain. It is advisable that a large event (over 10,000 people) includes provisions for a clearly identified logistical command post with an effective communications system.

## Contingency Plans

Some events may need contingency plans to be written to provide for occurrences, such as bomb threats, fire or evacuation. Contingency plans follow a risk assessment by the organizer which is an exercise necessary to identify any potential hazards. Thereafter, measures must be introduced to remove or reduce the hazard.

You have a responsibility to develop contingency plans which will guide safe actions and procedures at times of crisis. These need to be considered in conjunction with the Emergency Services well before the event.

## Contingency Planning

The primary goal of contingency planning is to be prepared for all emergencies that might negatively impact residents in a community. Contingency plans are the specific written assignments of roles and functions during times of crises or for major community events. Each department, public and private organization should have a contingency plan. Personnel and alternates should be identified as contacts for emergency access.

A designated site for a command center should be part of any contingency plan. The command center should have representatives from the mayor's office, law enforcement, public works, fire department, and health organizations, who will communicate and coordinate emergency activities.

Those in charge of the command center and the elected officials need to know what constitutional provisions, operating policies, and state and federal statutes will be in effect when there is a public event or civil disorder condition. For example:

- ▶ Under what circumstances does the governor assume partial or complete responsibility for civil emergencies in a local jurisdiction? What criteria would be used for a determination of a state of emergency? Under what conditions may the state authorities activate the National Guard or call for other external law enforcement assistance? Have personnel who may be mobilized for an emergency received appropriate training in the complexities and sensitivities of dealing with minority-centered disputes and protest issues? Do all state law enforcement agencies have policies regarding non-lethal or disabling means of apprehension? Do all agencies have the same policy?

Before state assistance is summoned, all means of using non-coercive force should be employed. Staff of the Community Relations Service, minority community leaders, clergy, human relations commission, police chaplains, volunteers from minority police organizations, and community volunteers should be called upon to conduct conciliation and peacekeeping activities.



### Remember

Crowd Control is always an important planning consideration – both the likely makeup of the attendees and how to control them.

Elderly citizens and small children require adequate planning, particularly if lengthy marches are part of the event. Organizers should make provisions for those who will have difficulty walking long distances. Adequate water supplies and sanitary facilities should be carefully considered by the event organizer. Food provisions should be considered as well, especially if the time period of the event is lengthy. Please keep in mind that visitors are often unfamiliar with local resources

and services. All indoor and outdoor sites for special events must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Disabled access may include parking, restrooms, clear paths of travel, transportation, accessible vendors and booths. If all areas are not accessible, information should be provided to attendees indicating the accessible restrooms, parking, clear paths of travel, etc.

The nature of the event will also determine the makeup of the crowd attending. If the organizers are planning a march will it attract people opposed to it or rowdy elements just looking to cause trouble? A Lady Gaga concert will attract a far more exuberant audience than a Barry Manilow show, and both your staffing and security planning must reflect this. Your planning must take this into account and you should consult with law enforcement and seek their guidance. Crowd control is a crucial element of successful special event planning. Adequate training of event marshals/security personnel and the use of equipment, such as barriers and fencing are measures to consider in the management of crowds.

## Diary Clashes

Fix the date of your event as early as possible to try to ensure that there are no clashes with other major events. If a serious clash is identified, there are a number of implications including the absence of sufficient emergency services personnel and severe traffic congestion – and probably fewer people attending your event.

## Documentation



### Must Do

From the moment you start planning your event you should document all your actions and decisions.

Keep a full account of all planning meetings – what was discussed and what decisions were made. At the next meeting review the notes to make sure nothing slipped through the cracks and everything that should have been done, was done and if not, why not. Contact other organizations and groups that may have organized similar events elsewhere to see what problems they encountered. If they produced a report after their event, ask if you can have a copy. It could prove invaluable in planning yours.

Document who is responsible for what, all important numbers and other contact information. List all documents – emergency plans, maps, floor plans, aerial photographs, MOUs and so on. Maintain a running log listing all calls from the media and answers given, problems that arose and how they were solved, and anything else that might help you and others plan better next time.

## Entertainment Licensing

A public entertainment license is required where any premises are used for the public performance of plays, dancing, music or other similar entertainment, including karaoke and discos. A combination of recorded sound and one or two “live” performers playing at the same time also requires a public entertainment license. In certain circumstances, a license is required for premises which are used for private dancing, music or other similar entertainment which is profit-making. Outdoor events may also require a public entertainment license.

The local authority issues the licenses and may attach a schedule of conditions imposing certain restrictions to ensure that local residents are not unnecessarily disturbed and to protect the health, safety and welfare of those attending the event. Safety provisions including emergency access routes may also feature.

## Environmental Health

Noise associated with events can cause significant problems, and event organizers are strongly advised to contact their local authority’s environmental health department if this is likely to be an issue. In particular, any event that finishes after midnight (and in some areas even earlier) will require exceptional planning to prevent complaints being received and the possible intervention of

environmental health officers and the police. Some thought should also be given to the location of potentially noisy equipment, such as generators and compressors.

Fireworks displays involve other issues, and guidance can be obtained from fire safety officers. Generally, displays should start and finish as early as possible, and in most locations, the use of “mortar shells” and similar loud-noise fireworks is not considered appropriate. If the event is to be held on or near a coastline, the Coast Guard should be notified.

Catering and public health matters must be considered, and the local authority’s environmental health officers will offer advice about specific requirements. Sanitary arrangements and the disposal of waste should be discussed with environmental health officers.

### Fire Safety

This aspect must receive serious consideration and your local fire safety officer can provide further guidance in this respect.

First Aid and Emergency Medical Services are essential in event planning. Onsite, trained, and licensed professionals allow event organizers to be proactive when it comes to providing immediate emergency medical assistance.

Lost and Found Services are another critical planning item. Event organizers should exercise special care to provide well identified signs, announcement by public address systems or pre-event handouts that clearly designate such services. In setting up a lost and found service, it is important for event organizers to assign individuals who will remain at the lost and found area until the event is fully terminated.

### Health and Safety Issues

Health and Safety legislation will apply to many events. The risks associated with an event should be assessed beforehand, and the appropriate control measures put in place. Organizers will always retain a duty of care to people working or visiting an event and safety must always be an important feature before, during and after an event.

Should you require further help, contact your local authority’s environmental health department. Specific attention should be paid to:

**Alarm Systems** - if your alarm systems, either intruder or fire, fail, will they sound or be silent? If they become silent, the people the systems are intended to protect will be at risk. If they sound, what are your evacuation procedures?

**Door Staff** - if you have door staff they must be properly trained and may have to comply with the local authority’s requirements for training.

**Elevators** - if there is an elevator, it may malfunction with people inside. What would you do?

**Outdoor heating and lighting** - if you are holding an event in a marquee, electrical and gas installations must be properly installed and be safe. Marquees should never be heated with gas fires or heaters with an exposed flame.

Any accident resulting from an act or omission (including a lack of training) could result in litigation against the organizers or action taken under legislation, for example the Health and Safety at Work Act, Fire Precautions, Workplace Regulations, etc.

## Intelligence



### Remember

The more information you have about the event the better able you are to plan for it.

Intel can be gathered from numerous sources – local law enforcement and FBI, Department of Homeland Security, fusion centers and so on. Research similar events that have taken place in other parts of the country to see how many people attended and what the makeup of the crowd was. Check out participating speakers and VIPs – are they controversial and likely

to attract counter demonstrations? Gather together detailed maps and aerial photos of the area, as well as access and egress routes. All this information is needed to develop your risk assessment and plan accordingly.

## Insurance

Event organizers should arrange insurance cover to indemnify them against civil litigation. This is referred to as public liability insurance, and details can be obtained from any reputable insurance company. It is worth noting that many local authorities expect a minimum cover for major events.

Parking and Transportation is an especially important planning item. Large events involving many buses require active liaison efforts with both the local police department and the local authority to ensure adequate parking areas, bus identification, and drop-off/pick-up points are well planned and coordinated. Adequate provision must be made for parking to avoid congestion on access roads. Onsite parking is preferred, but this must be effectively managed, and for large events the employment of private contractors should be considered.

## Permits and Licenses

Check to see what licenses and permits are required in order to hold your event and ensure you apply for them well ahead of time. Your local authority will tell you how long it normally takes for the application to be reviewed and a decision made.

## Police Costs

Police resources are expensive and to avoid reducing other policing duties, the police department will seek to recover from the organizers the cost of officers sent to special events. This should be

discussed at an early stage of the planning process, and it would be sensible for organizers of large or commercial events to set aside funds for police resources.

Public Transport must also be considered. Special schedules are operated on weekends and holidays. Local buses may need to be re-routed or services may need to be supplemented in order to facilitate certain events.

## Safety Officer

Consideration should also be given to appointing an onsite safety coordinator whose role will include liaising with the emergency services and local council officers. A close working relationship (including radio communications) should be established between this person and the emergency service supervisors in attendance.

## Security

The role of event security is to maintain an effective and efficient safe and secure environment while allowing the event to proceed with as little inconvenience as possible to those participating.

Training is essential to ensure the right approach is always taken so that no situation escalates out of hand.

## Site Management

Public safety and car park management within an event site are the responsibility of the organizers. Therefore, sufficient properly trained and equipped stewards and attendants must be provided.

## Special Requirements

Some authorities require Clean Hands Certification – a description of the event, the location, date and time of the event, date and time you plan to complete the construction and set-up of sales booths, equipment, amusement equipment, etc. On receipt of this information, your authority may require a site inspection before approval to continue is given.

Some authorities, like the District of Columbia, require event organizers to get a consent list of 90 percent of the resident housekeepers and occupants of business and other establishments within a distance of 500 feet from the perimeter of the location where the event is to take place. The signatures of building managers/owners will be accepted for multi-unit buildings. Electrical and construction permits might also be needed, if the set-up will include construction of a tent, stands or booths, stages, etc.

Stages are an important item for consideration. For large crowds, it is essential that staging be of sufficient height and visibility to project the activities to the crowd adequately. Security for the stage should be carefully planned. For large activities, snow fencing or barricades should be considered

for stage security. In setting up the stage, always leave a well-identified emergency access route. Although problems of crowd control are not expected, such a route is especially important when emergency medical care is needed by participants near the front of the crowd.

### **Statement of Intent**

At large events, the police will compile a statement of intent to identify the division of responsibilities between the police and the organizer and the command procedures necessary in the event of any emergency.

### **Traffic Considerations**

Events on public roads are not encouraged, but it is recognized that there are occasions when this is unavoidable. If the event requires a road closure, traffic diversions or the placement of “no waiting” cones, then application must be made for a traffic regulation order from the local authority. There is often a cost involved and several months’ notice is required. When such an order is sought, the local authority will consult the police and, thereafter, there must be a clear understanding between the organizer and police as to who will acquire, place and collect signs and equipment.

For large events it may be necessary for you to provide route signs. Traffic direction on the public highway can only be undertaken by police officers or under the direction of a police officer. It is dangerous for others to direct traffic on the road. Traffic direction on private land within the site can be undertaken by anyone, but persons under 18 years of age should not be used. All traffic controllers on a site should wear a brightly colored, reflective tabard for their own safety.

### **Use of the Media**

Local television, radio and newspapers all provide a useful medium to advise the public of events, access routes and the potential for traffic congestion. You should think about those living and working in the area, as well as those attending the event. In some circumstances, the local authority will authorize the display of information signs prior to the event to provide regular road users with the opportunity to find an alternative route.

### **Venue**

The choice of a venue is critical to the success of any event.

You must know roughly how many people are likely to attend because, even if the event is in a park that can accommodate thousands, will there be adequate nearby parking or public transports, restroom facilities, and so on? All these factors must be determined by the event planning committee. Most venues, whether public or privately-owned, will also issue guidelines on maximum capacity and other important considerations, and these must be taken into account.

Weather is an important factor in special event planning. Washington, D.C., is subject to hot, humid weather from May 30 through October 15. Orlando, Florida is under a hurricane alert from

June 1 to November 30 and has frequent summer afternoon thunderstorms which give it the title “lightning capital of the world.” While you cannot control the weather, you can check records to get a good indication of what to expect, and you can take out insurance just in case the event has to be cancelled because of the weather.



### Caution

A major rally in a huge convention center that attracts only 100 people will be a huge and costly failure. If you play it safe and choose a smaller venue that accommodates only 500 people and 5,000 turn up, you have another disaster on your hands.

Summer events often mean heat and high humidity, so crowds need to drink lots of liquids and first aid teams have to be ready to deal with people suffering from heat exhaustion and dehydration. Heat and humidity also pose a threat to food being served at an outdoor event, so organizers and vendors have to make the appropriate provisions.

Winter events are even more dependent on good weather. A sudden blizzard the day before an event might prevent anyone being able to get to you on the day and, worse still, a sudden blizzard during the event

might strand hundreds of thousands of people. That is why planning is so important because all these contingencies have to be taken into account.

Weather should factor in your risk assessment, and you should come up with contingency plans for your various “what if” scenarios. For example, you might be hosting a celebrity golf tournament that will attract thousands of visitors. What contingency plans must you have in place if there is a sudden violent thunderstorm with hundreds of spectators seeking cover from lightning strikes under the trees? You must have the capability of being alerted in good time of approaching storms, and all stewards must be fully aware of what action to take should the need to evacuate the course arise.

It is the responsibility of the event organizer to comply with the following minimum requirements for planning and coordinating a special event:

- Acquire adequate financing to conduct the event.
- Obtain all necessary contracts, permits, and licenses required to conduct the event.
- Acquire necessary insurance coverage and/or bonding required for the event.
- Ensure that all streets are accessible to emergency vehicles and equipment at all times via a minimum 20 ft. dedicated and unobstructed emergency lane, and as may be further determined by the police and fire departments.
- Conduct the event in accordance with appropriate and relevant local, state and federal laws, regulations, codes, and guidelines.

The following examples are based on District of Columbia regulations. Every authority is different and, as organizer, you must ensure your event is legal, properly permitted and effectively managed. These examples do, however, illustrate the sort of planning steps that you may have to take.