Incident and emergency planning for safe and healthy crowded places

Speed read

- An incident or emergency may result from a hostile act or an undiscovered hazard and may not necessarily originate from within the crowded place.
- Event, incident and emergency plans apply in all contexts and before, during and after an event and include many sub-plans e.g. risk, communication, evacuation, transport and security management plans.
- Risk management and community and stakeholder consultation is key across all plans.

Key points

Prepare and plan:
• **The incident and emergency plan will be developed as part of the overall event plan.** The plan will align with plans, policies, regulations, permits, licenses and requirements of local councils or other relevant agencies. Consider researching similar venues or events, seeking advice, and understanding the crowd.
• **Describe actions to follow and key considerations**, such as notification methods and alarms, evacuation procedures, communication methods (as per the communications plan), staff in charge, assembly areas, response to first aid incidents and fire, contact details, considerations for people with disabilities and procedures.
• **Include an emergency map** highlighting access and egress for emergency and essential services, emergency evacuation points, general crowd movement and flow and 'pinch points', capacity plans for staff and volunteers and weather considerations and monitoring.
• **Plan for insurance and legal considerations** that cover liability for injury, losses and financial obligations.
• **Conduct exercises before the event** to check systems, arrangements and plans work. Factors to test include communication systems, security and staff capacity and responsibilities.

Respond:
• **When an incident occurs, follow the plan.** Use prepared and planned procedures to respond. In some responses, an Emergency Coordination Centre and / or an Emergency Operations Centre will be established by emergency services separate to the Event Management Centre, to support enhanced, multi-agency coordination.
• **Occasionally the response will involve *cancellation or postponement* of an event**, which can come with its own risks and should be subject to clearly defined approvals and communications plans.
• **Occasionally the response will involve *evacuation* of certain areas within the event, or evacuation of the whole event**. Evacuation procedures and plans should be included in the emergency management plan.

Recover:

- After a major incident or emergency, recovery can affect many groups, such as people directly involved in the incident, the crowd, staff and management, agencies involved, and the organiser.
- Support for affected people, as well as active contribution to strategies for preventing similar future incidents, are key.
- Psychosocial support after an incident or emergency is important and depends on the capacity to identify and register people (attendees, staff, volunteers) who may have been exposed to stress.

Debriefing and lessons management:

Debriefs help determine response effectiveness and can include:

- a hot debrief carried out immediately after a shift or phase of an event
- agency debrief organisational level debrief undertaken by all agencies involved
- cold debrief held after the event has concluded when enough time has passed for findings to be analysed from other debriefs.

Debriefs form part of lessons management and evaluation, which should be embedded in event and incident management plans.

Take action

- Check out the components of an event plan in Page 35 of the Safe and healthy crowded places handbook. These components also form the basis for incident and emergency planning.
- Use the Safe and Healthy Crowded Places Checklists
- Read the Quick Guide: Key Principles and Enables for Safe and Healthy Crowded Places

More information

- Refer to Chapter 8 of the handbook for in-depth guidance on working with first Aid, ambulance and medical services (AIDR 2018)
- Safe and Healthy Crowded Places has more information on managing hostile acts, guidelines and regulations for event managers, crowd psychology and crowd science, sexual assault and harassment guidelines and media coverage of incidents (AIDR 2024)
- Incident Management (AIDR 2022)
- Lessons Management (AIDR 2019)
- Emergency Planning (AIDR 2020)
- Community Recovery (AIDR 2018)
- Evacuation Planning (AIDR 2022)

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