



Key Considerations for Event Safety

April 19, 2024



By Angela Zaltsman

When organizing an event, your prerogative must be bigger than just ensuring attendees have a good time, or securing a certain ROI for stakeholders. At the core, the most important consideration of any event is keeping guests and staff safe.

While hosting an event, it is your responsibility to ensure the safety of all people in attendance. There are many considerations that must be prepared for when organizing an event, so it is important that security is factored in from the very start of event planning to the day of the event's execution.

Successful **security** cannot be done spontaneously, so it is important to plan from the very start. Behind every successful event, there is a security plan that has been designed specifically for the particular event – there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Security measures in cases of guest injury, property damage, over crowdedness, rowdiness, and unexpected situations such as emergency evacuations, should all be considered well in advance to the event date.

Preparation is at the heart of successful event security, and it is important that adequate time has been given to assess the venue/location, audience, and event type.

Venue + Location

In order to effectively plan for an event, it is imperative to know the venue inside and out. This same notion can be applied when considering the event's security.

First things first, conduct a venue inspection. Identify all entry points, and establish boundaries where the event perimeter begins and ends. When inspecting the venue, it is also important to understand the measures in place that prevent emergencies from occurring, such as the rules and regulations related to fire safety.

It is recommended to create a diagram of the space that can easily and effectively be shared to and followed by all events personnel leading up to and on the event date. While the goal of event security is to prevent threats before they materialize, it is important to have a contingency plan in place should any worst-case-scenarios arise.

One of the most important aspects of emergency planning at events is having a clear evacuation plan. This plan should outline the procedures for safely evacuating attendees in the event of an emergency. This includes evacuation routes, emergency exits, and a designated meeting point outside of the venue for all guests and staff.

In case an emergency does arise, it is important to have a communication plan in place to alert attendees of the emergency and provide instructions on what to do. It is also important to have trained staff on hand to assist with the evacuation process. This includes having designated individuals to communicate and coordinate the evacuation, as well as individuals who are trained in providing emergency first aid, if necessary.

Audience

As already touched upon, the main goal of security at events is not to respond to threats, but rather to prevent them. When it comes to an event's audience, as expected, the larger the crowd, the more likely it is that something can go wrong. As such, staff need to be comfortable with managing groups and exerting authority.

In respects to crowd management, staff and security should be able to monitor crowding and lines, as well as ensure exits are cleared and guest do not stray into any inaccessible areas. One of the most important considerations: ensuring that the venue never reaches beyond its capacity limit, inclusive off all staff and attendees. Going over capacity not only heightens the risk of things going astray, but fines and penalties can also be incurred from poor management.

Along with capacity, another important aspect of event security is guest screening. This can involve checking guests' bags on arrival to reduce the risk of attendees bringing any sort of weapon or contraband into your event. Security checks should include checking that guests are not bringing in any sort of alcohol and/or illicit substance into the event as inebriated guests can pose potential security threats.

In recent years, terrorism threats at events have become a growing concern. Terrorism threats can cause fear and panic amongst attendees, resulting in injuries and even, in some tragic cases, fatalities. One of the most effective ways to protect attendees from potential threats is to have a visible security presence at the event. This can include both private security guards and/or law enforcement officers. By having a visible security presence, attendees are assured that safety measures are in place, and any bad actors are deterred from instigating violence.

However, not all security risks are physical – guests' data, identities, and devices should also be considered when executing an event. Ransomware attacks are one of the biggest cybersecurity threats at large scale events, so to protect guests, it is suggested to set up and use password-protected Wi-Fi whenever possible.

Event Type

There is no exact ruling when it comes to the ratio of security personnel to number of guests at an event. Some may say it is good to have one security personnel for every 20 guests at a small function, or one specialist for every 100 guests in a larger setting. Different venues may also enforce their own minimum security staff to attendee count.

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the requirements for one event, such as a large benefit concert, may vary significantly compared to another, such as a small corporate function in a 4-star hotel. This is why it is important to understand the nature of the event and its likely attendees in order to make the best decision of the number of security personnel required to effectively execute the event.

As well as determining the right number of security personnel required for an event, it is also important to consider the type of personnel needed. For example, the presence of guards can be helpful in managing crowd control, however, private security to oversee a specific individual or individuals, can be necessary at large-scale, high-calibre events.

Security is critical at events because it helps maintain order, prevent accidents, and ultimately ensure guest safety. Without proper security measures in place, events are vulnerable to various risks, including crowd control issues, safety hazards, and violence. By taking the time to plan around the venue/location, audience, and event type, planners can prepare for emergencies and ensure that everyone has safe and positive experience. Not only does ensuring safety benefit the welfare of guests and staff, but it heightens the reputation of the organization and planner hosting the event.

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