



Considerations for Public Safety Planning at Special Events

In order to ensure the safety of participants and staff, and to reduce the strain on local resources, special event organizers must consider and plan for the potential risks to their event. There are many natural hazards that Denver experiences that could severely impact an event including severe thunderstorms (hail, lightning, and/or strong wind gusts), tornados, extreme temperatures (hot and cold), and flooding. Man-made hazards include protests, intentional disruptions, and criminal or even terrorist activity.

As an event organizer, it is important to familiarize yourself with the potential impacts of each of these hazards to your event. It is also important to consider the actions that you and your staff would take should any of these occur during your event. The following are a few tips for event organizers to consider.

Plan as a team – Coordinate with local public safety authorities in advance of the event to understand their processes; this should include Police, Fire, EMS, and Emergency Management.

- Share maps of the venue and highlight emergency access routes, first aid stations, concession areas, traffic concerns, etc.
- Request a contact list of local agencies that you may need on the day of your event.

Understand the risks – Since most severe weather events happen with little or no notice, staying current on weather conditions by monitoring weather forecasts in the days prior to your event is the most effective way to prepare.

- Evaluate hazards that could impact your event. Review [Denver's Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment \(HIRA\)](http://www.denvergov.org/oem) (can be found at www.denvergov.org/oem) and plan for potential seasonal threats.
- Communicate with local authorities if there is a known threat or a history of threats to your event.
- Communicate with local authorities about concerns surrounding the safety of your event (e.g. large, unruly crowds, etc.).
- Consider the scenarios surrounding your event that could place a strain on local resources.
- If using a NOAA weather radio to monitor the weather, ensure your staff is properly trained on the meanings of National Weather Service advisories, watches, and warnings and what actions should be taken for each.
- Ensure your staff members are aware of the city's outdoor warning sirens and what actions are needed if they are activated.

Understand the vulnerabilities – Considering the vulnerabilities of your participants/attendees is also critical. Some vulnerabilities, including the list below, can present a complex scenario that can quickly and easily overwhelm event participants and even your staff. Event organizers should consider having an emergency communication plan in place, especially when planning events with large crowds.

- Crowd size (participants and attendees)
- Crowd composition (e.g. families, elderly, children, non-English speaking, VIP's, etc.)
- Crowd disposition (e.g. unruly, disruptive, etc.)
- General health status and mobility of the crowd
- Alcohol consumption and drug use

Create a communications plan – Define how you will communicate internally with your staff members (to include volunteers) during the event.

- Develop a protocol (call tree) that outlines who should be contacted during an emergency, in what order, and by whom.
- Determine what your backup communication plan is.
- Train your staff members on your primary and backup communications plans (e.g., how to use a radio, etc).
- Understand how local agencies communicate with the public during weather events.
- Define how you will communicate with local agencies during the event.
- Provide a list of contacts to give to local authorities.
- Identify who will be responsible for media inquiries.
- Develop a process for communicating with the public and media regarding security issues.
- Identify who with your organization is authorized to make decisions regarding postponing or canceling your event due to severe weather and how these decisions will be communicated to the public.

Consider an evacuation plan – Evacuation plans are especially critical when planning an outdoor event. Within your evacuation plan, it is important to identify potential areas where people can shelter in place or evacuate to that are near or within your event location.

- Coordinate with local authorities about where potential shelters are located near your event.
- Determine the location of an onsite or nearby assembly area(s) for your staff should the need arise.

Other considerations – Identify the locations of first aid stations and EMS staging areas with local authorities and event participants. Clearly distinguishing event staff/volunteers (uniforms, hats, etc.) can significantly help to reduce impacts and response times should an incident occur.

- Determine if there should be a first aid station on site and who should staff it.
- Determine if you need mobile EMS teams.
- Define who will do ambulance transports.
- If using a private EMS company, ensure that they have coordinated with Denver Paramedics.
- Coordinate any security needs with local authorities and decide if you need to hire off duty police or additional security.
- Determine where your onsite command post will be located and who needs to have access to it (e.g. Police, Fire, EMS, private security, etc.)
- Determine if there is a need to credential staff members. If not credentialing, determine what type(s) of identification your staff members will have.
- Ensure communication protocols for staff and volunteers are in place for suspicious activity.
- Identify any areas that may require access control for pedestrians and vehicles.
- If applicable, determine how volunteers will be vetted.

For more information on public safety planning at special events, or to discuss or review your existing emergency plans, please contact the Denver Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security at 720-865-7600.