

Contingency Planning and Evacuation

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Contingency planning refers to preparing plans and procedures to effectively respond to and manage incidents which may occur outwith the normal running of the planned event. This could be an untoward incident, emergency, health and safety incidents or any other circumstances which impact the safe running of the event.

The aim of the contingency plans should be to:

- preserve life by getting people away from harm
- treat casualties
- summon and assist the Emergency Services as required and ensure that unobstructed access is available to them
- minimise disruption and impact of the incident
- provide information, reassurance and guidance to those impacted by the incident to allay public fear (other attendees, parents & performers etc.)
- restore normality and allow the event to continue
- ensure comprehensive details of the incident and any actions taken are recorded
- protect the reputation of the event

Event organisers are advised to consider the risks to their event and develop plans for resolving each incident by utilising the resources available on-site or with support of the Emergency Services when deemed an emergency.

Untoward Incidents

Untoward incidents, are defined as a routine occurrence that impacts upon the safe running of the event. They should be manageable by the event, utilising resources on-site.

Untoward incidents which could potentially occur at events include:

- failure of VIPs or headline performers to turn up
- crowd Management issues
- traffic management failure
- adverse weather
- accidents and medical emergencies
- illness to key staff or an incident which prevents them from working
- partial or complete evacuation of the event area
- evacuation of medical emergencies
- cancellation or curtailment of the event for any reason
- systems failures; power, radios, public address systems, event control room failure etc.
- collapse of temporary structures
- failure for suppliers to provide key facilities or equipment (toilets, staging or stewards etc.)
- fire

Event organisers will need to be confident that they have adequate resources and robust processes in place to ensure that any untoward incidents can be resolved. Areas to consider:

- clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each incident and process
- communication measures to raise the alarm, inform the public in attendance or those travelling to the event
- processes to stop performances
- allocation of resources and initial response (use of fire extinguishers etc.)

- providing first aid and medical assistance
- crowd management, including partial or full evacuation to places of safety
- evacuation of people with disabilities or families with young children / push chairs
- cancellation or curtailment of the event
- summoning the emergency services
- traffic management, including emergency vehicles access
- incident control and the logging of actions and communications
- liaison with emergency services
- media response and the quelling of rumours

Emergency Situations

Emergency situations are defined as incidents that pose a threat of serious injury, loss of life and/or a breakdown in public order. These incidents will likely require the Police to assume the co-ordination of its resolution. Example of these incidents could be:

- terrorist attack, suspect packages or bomb threats
- incidents on local roads impacting access, egress or emergency access arrangements for the event
- demonstrations
- public disorder
- theft and criminality
- fires beyond the capabilities of the on-site resources
- multiple casualties or injuries beyond the capabilities of the medical resources on-site

One of the key elements of any contingency or emergency plan will be to rapidly evacuate the affected area to prevent further harm. A plan should be developed with the stewarding provider whose staff will be responsible for managing any evacuation.

Full evacuations are both dangerous and disruptive, so careful consideration should be given as to whether it is a safer and more proportionate option to carry out a partial evacuation away from danger to a place of safety within the event site where patrons can be cared for using the on-site facilities (food, water welfare, toilets etc.).

The available evacuation routes should be assessed to ensure that they are suitable in size and number for the quantity of people attending. These routes should be well maintained, well lit, and lead to a place of safety rather than another risk. Further information on Crowd Capacity and Evacuation can be found [here](#)

Organisers should consider the communication needs in the event of an evacuation:

- notification of the incident
- show stop procedures
- notifying stewards discreetly to prevent public alarm
- notifying the public
- activating the evacuation instruction and managing the process safely.

In established venues there may be alarm systems in place but in temporary event venues this will be unlikely, so consideration should be given to how communication will be made – consider the use of pre-recorded messages which allow for all to evacuate whilst the message plays on repeat.

Any contingency plans developed will often involve multiple organisations including the emergency services as well as suppliers and contractors. It is essential that each organisation understands their role and responsibility in managing contingency and/or emergency situations. Any organisation required to act to resolve a situation should be actively engaged in developing the plans. Contingency plans are often tested as part of the multi-agency **table top** exercise.

Further Reading

[Planning for Incidents and Emergencies](#)

[A Developing Emergency Case Study](#)

[Purple Guide - Contingency Emergency Planning](#)