Special events often involve activities outside the scope of an organization’s normal operations. It is important that these unique risks be considered and addressed.

The following are potential mishaps:

- Food poisoning at a fish fry
- Collapse of a registration tent
- Car accident due to alcohol consumption at a dinner dance
- Theft of a cash box at a street fair
- Spectators injured by the collapse of temporary bleachers

Whether it is an annual parade, a walk-a-thon or a golf tournament, there are steps that can be taken to ensure the success of the event and safety of all involved.

**Planning and Preparation**
Planning is an essential part of event success. While many of the risk management concerns remain the same, (i.e. facility safety, fire prevention, first aid, etc.) the extent of the risk and necessary precautions will vary based on the type of event activities and number of people attending. Each event should have a Special Event Risk Management Plan. By failing to plan, you run the possibility of injury to participants, spectators or property.

**Recordkeeping**
Keeping proper records will aid in identifying and controlling risks. Events typically require pre-event inspections, contracts, insurance, and post-event evaluation.

“First ask yourself: What is the worst that can happen? Then prepare to accept it. Then proceed to improve on the worst.”

_Dale Carnegie_

Paperwork and records that should be kept include:

- Risk Management Plan
- Staff/volunteer applications and training records
- Event site and utility maps
- Copies of permits, licenses, and certifications
- Emergency evacuation plan
- Contractor agreements/safe work procedures
- Certificates of insurance
- Maintenance and repair records
SAFETY CHECKLIST

ACCESS and EGRESS
- Adequate number of entries/exits
- Entries/exits clear and accessible
- Exit pathways well defined and clearly marked

ELECTRICAL
- Wiring up to code and in good condition
- Adequate voltage/wattage for event use
- Electrical equipment protected from weather
- Sufficient emergency generator power available
- Premises inspected by a licensed electrician

FIRST AID/COMMUNICATION
- Stations suitably located, identified and supervised
- Facilities adequate for event type
- Mobile communication between event personnel, first aid and security

STAFF, VOLUNTEER and CONTRACTORS
- Background screening
- Training with records kept
- Copies of applications and resumes kept

PERMITS, LICENSING AND REGISTRATION
- City, town and state permits obtained
- Food handling/sales permits obtained
- Liquor licenses/permits obtained

TRAFFIC FLOW
- Clearly defined areas for traffic, separated from pedestrians
- Provisions for emergency vehicle entrance/exit
- Fire hydrant access

AMUSEMENT STRUCTURES
- Structures have current license/certification
- Electrical inspection up to date
- Appropriate space, perimeter protection and lighting

PARKING
- Sufficient number, type and handicap accessible
- Adequate signage, lighting and access to site
- Adequate security

SEATING
- Sufficient seating
- ADA accommodations
- Bleachers inspected for safety

FOOD SAFETY
- Adequate refrigeration, storage, heat and prep areas
- Licensed/certified food handlers
- Proper food handling procedures

ALCOHOL SAFETY
- Adequate training for distribution (TIPS Program)
- Require identification, wristbands
- Make alternative transportation available

FIRE PREVENTION
- Fire detection and suppression systems
- Local and central station fire alarm system
- Personnel trained on use and response
- Site inspection by local fire department

UTILITIES/SITE SERVICES
- Location of underground services (electricity, gas, water) known
- Overhead power lines identified
- Event personnel have maps of service main locations

Safety Checklist
An event safety checklist is a guide to the many issues that should be considered when planning an event. Depending on the event, some of these issues may require more detailed management than others.

A sample special event checklist is provided below:
SAFETY CHECKLIST cont’d

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES
- Plans and procedures documented
- Staff and volunteers trained on procedures
- Evacuation route posted and practiced

SIGNAGE
- Entries, exits, toilet facilities, emergency phones
- Hazardous areas signage – authorized personnel only
- Multi-lingual

STAGING AND PLATFORMS
- Electrical equipment appropriate for outdoor/heavy use
- Adequate access/egress around staging and platforms
- Erected, inspected and dismantled by qualified personnel

MAINTENANCE
- Maintenance personnel onsite
- Personnel have event managers contact information
- Maintenance records accessible before/during/post event

INFLATABLE STRUCTURES
- Structure properly secured
- Qualified safety inspection performed and documented
- Weather monitored and shut down procedures known

AMENITIES
- Adequate toilet and hand washing facilities
- Clean water available to staff and participants
- Adequate trash disposal

CROWD MANAGEMENT
- Occupancy monitored and limit not exceeded
- Event safety rules and regulations posted
- Security personnel visible

INSURANCE/LEGAL REVIEW
- Review coverage for event with agent
- Obtain certificates of insurance from all vendors, contractors and co-sponsors
- Waivers obtained from participants
- Avoid signing waivers of subrogation; opt for mutual hold-harmless agreements
- Organization should be named as an additional insured on the policies of vendors, contractors and co-sponsors
- Report all incidents to insurance agent and carrier
- Legal review of all contracts

“By failing to prepare, you prepare to fail.”
Benjamin Franklin
**Post Event Analysis**
Post-event evaluations provide the opportunity to discuss what went well, what didn’t, and what could be improved. As with any area of event safety, all parties involved should be represented in this process. Keep careful documentation in order to update the Special Event Risk Management Plan and implement improvements for future events.

**Summary**
The event planner’s task of reducing threats and risks can be overwhelming, but planning is the key to event success. This success is not only measured by the number of participants or the funds raised, but also by the safety of those attending. Use these tools to plan your next special event.

**Additional resources:**
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) – www.osha.gov
- The Weather Channel – www.weather.com
- American Red Cross – www.redcross.org
- National Terror Alert Resource Center – www.nationalterroralert.com

“Next week there can’t be any crisis. My schedule is already full.”

*Henry Kissinger*