

Planning Special Events: A Comprehensive Guide

Every special event requires careful planning to mitigate liability exposures, prevent accidents, and avoid lawsuits arising from disorganized arrangements. Such events include parades, festivals, fundraisers, holiday celebrations, and any public gathering on public property.

Importance of Communication

Effective communication among all stakeholders is essential, including:

- Vendors
- Maintenance personnel
- Security officials
- Emergency response teams

By implementing appropriate risk management measures and safety protocols, you can enhance the event's safety and success.

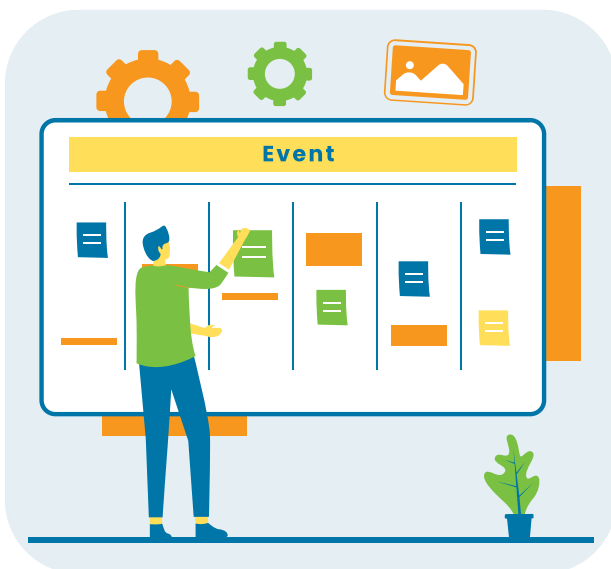


The checklist below highlights key risk management considerations for planning special events. By focusing on these key areas, event planners can create a well-organized and safe environment, minimizing risks and enhancing the overall experience for attendees.

✓ Evaluate All Events Independently

Each event will have its own unique risks to consider and should be evaluated independently. Risks may vary depending on location, traffic, number of attendees, whether alcohol is served, etc. When evaluating risks, try to imagine all the potential scenarios where things could go wrong, how people could get hurt, how property could be damaged, etc.

Below are some general questions to consider for each event:



- Where will it be held? Indoors? Outdoors? Both?
- Will the event be confined to one area? Could attendees migrate to adjacent locations?
- How many attendees are expected, and how will that number affect public safety?
- Who is sponsoring the event?
- Who is participating in providing the event? Have they provided these events before? For how long?
- Are there any risks that are unique to this type of event?
- Who controls the property at the time of the event?

✓ Preparation of the Facility

Any facility you are making available for leasing or hosting special events should be up to date with fire and life-safety codes and inspected regularly, preferably prior to each lease.

This proactive approach not only ensures compliance with relevant regulations but also provides peace of mind to both you and the event organizers. Regular inspections help identify and address potential issues before they become significant problems, thereby minimizing risks and enhancing overall safety and attendee experience.

Furthermore, maintaining open communication with local fire departments and safety officials can help stay informed about updates or changes to safety standards.

Be sure to document all in-house and vendor inspections in case those records are called into question following an incident. If hazards or code violations are identified during inspections, they must be remedied prior to any event.



The most common injuries at indoor special events are slips, trips, and falls, so avoiding these hazards should be a focus of your inspections. Pay particular attention to stairs, handrails, all entry/exit areas, sidewalks, and parking lots. Keep in mind that visitors may not be aware of existing hazards in a building, such as a peeled-back carpet or a leaking water fountain.

Other considerations when prepping your facility for a special event:

- Provide the event organizer with the rules and your expectations regarding clean-up, which areas can be accessed, the restroom location, etc. Consider posting the rules as well.
- If security cameras are in place, ensure they are working properly and plan for monitoring, or at least record capability.
- Ensure the facility, sidewalks, and parking lot have adequate lighting. A common issue cited in litigation is inadequate lighting.
- Be sure to notify all of the designated outdoor smoking areas.
- If it is a large gathering, ensure the organizer knows where additional parking and outdoor gatherings are permitted. If alcohol is served, ensure that it is consumed only within permitted areas.



✓ Preparation of the Grounds

It is a good idea to walk the entire location for an outdoor event to identify potential hazards. Controlling outdoor hazards can be difficult, given variable conditions such as weather and traffic, and all potential scenarios should be factored into your planning.

More considerations when prepping for an outdoor special event:

- Work with Police, Fire, and DPW to evaluate all potential risks (security, emergency response, traffic).
- If security cameras are in place, ensure they are working properly and plan for monitoring, or at least record capability.
- Ensure the entire area is well-lit if held at night.
- Plan for crowd-control measures and additional police presence, if needed.
- Ensure parking lots and runoff areas do not interfere with the event or cause additional traffic.
- Review all safety procedures with contractors and vendors.

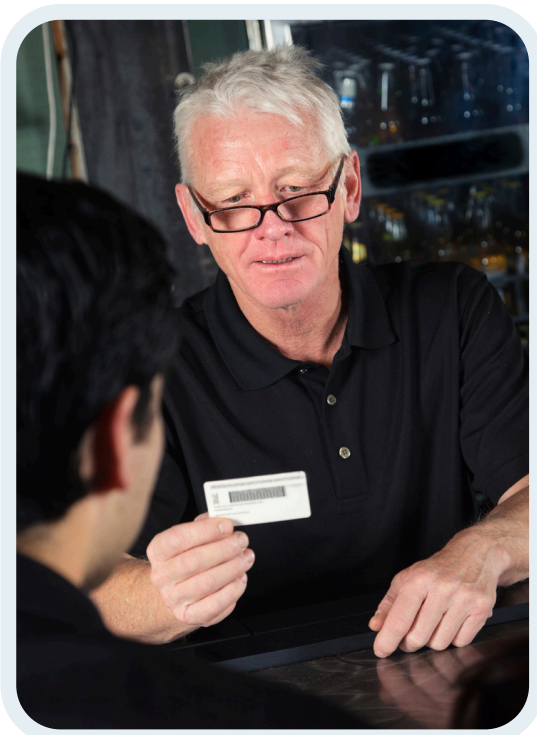


✓ Liquor Liability

Serving alcohol at an event may boost attendance, but it also increases your risk. Serving minors and intoxicated attendees is a serious concern. It is important to check with your insurance agent to determine whether additional insurance coverage is needed. Service of alcohol should be performed by appropriately licensed vendors with liquor liability insurance and TIPS-certified servers.

Some things to consider when serving alcohol:

- Ensure photo identification, such as a driver's license, is observed for proof of age before dispensing/selling alcohol to someone.
- People serving alcohol should be appropriately licensed in accordance with local ordinances and laws.
- Clarify how much alcohol will be served and over how long a period of time.
- Ensure pick-up/drop-off areas are available for alternative transportation.
- Ensure attendee condition is monitored throughout the event, and address intoxicated visitors swiftly and effectively without disrupting the event.
- Ensure Police/Fire/EMS departments are aware that alcohol will be served on public property.



✓ Risk Transfer

To protect your entity from lawsuits surrounding special events, it is best to transfer all risk to the event holder or the contractors managing the event.

To do so, you must ensure that the event holder or contractor has adequate insurance by asking for a certificate of insurance from the eventholder naming your entity as an additional insured. Certificates of insurance are evidence that the other party has insurance.

Ensure that the policies on the certificate are currently in force and will remain so throughout the event.

If the event holder does not have their own liability insurance, you may consider working with your local agent to identify pre-purchase options or single-event policies to assist the event holder in obtaining the needed coverage.

Hold-harmless and indemnification language is essential to any agreement with third-party event organizers.



You should include exculpatory provisions to the fullest extent allowed by your jurisdiction. These clauses help ensure that the event holder understands and accepts their legal obligations, and that you are protected from claims arising from their actions.

Please consult with your attorney to draft an agreement that adequately addresses any state and local requirements.

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