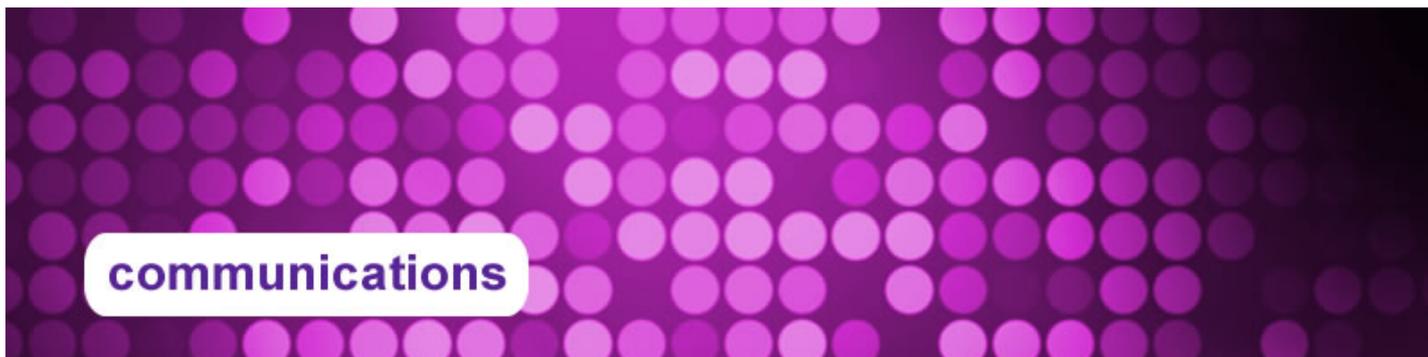


6. Communications



No matter what the size or type of event, communication is critical if it is to be a success as well as run smoothly and safely.

There are three principal areas of communication that need to be considered:

1. Communication between the organisers/those responsible and those helping on site, whether employed or volunteers.
2. Communication with external agencies, such as the police, fire services etc.
3. Communication with the public, both those attending the event and those who may be affected by it.

Methods of Communication

There are a number of methods for communicating both on and off the site, from dedicated radio systems to mobile phones. Choosing the right system will depend on a number of factors, from the scale of the event and size of the site to whether there is a mobile phone signal.

One key factor to always remember is that those working on the site, whether employed or volunteers, should always be able to communicate with those responsible for running it, and visa versa. Without this volunteers may feel isolated and vulnerable which may lead to them making decisions that have implications for other aspects of the event.

Radio Protocol

Radio discipline is essential for effective communications.

Those using radios should be required to follow some basic rules:

- Regularly check that the volume on the radio is turned up and that it is on the correct channel;
- Check that no-one else is on the channel before sending a message;
- Identify yourself and the person being called;
- Wait for a response before sending messages;
- Get confirmation that the message has been received and understood.

Planning is key

Those organizing an event need to consider four key areas when assessing their communications needs:

Pre-event:

- Who (e.g. local authority, police, fire services etc.) needs to be informed in advance about the event and how/when should this be done.

- How are suppliers and those working on the site, whether employees or volunteers, going to be briefed and kept informed;
- How are the public, both those affected by the event and potential attendees, going to be told about the event (e.g. marketing, leaflets, social media etc.)

During the event:

- How are those working on the site going to communicate with the organiser and each other. Is all communication to be channelled through one point?
- How will the communications system be managed to avoid lines being blocked at crucial times or messages not getting through?
- How will those running the event communicate with those attending (e.g. PA system, screens, social media etc.) and who will control this and ensure that the right information is given? Too much information may mean people don't listen.

In an emergency:

- If an emergency arises, how will the event communicate with outside services such as ambulance or fire as well as with those working or visiting the site.
- How will communications with attendees be managed to avoid unnecessary panic or alarm?

After the event:

- Getting feedback after an event, both from those working on the site as well as the public and external services, can be invaluable in planning future events but may also be important in dealing with any negatives that may arise afterwards, such as from a disgruntled resident who was affected in some way.

Equipment checks

Communications can only function if the equipment works so it is important to check in advance that the chosen system is functioning properly and, where possible, having a back-up plan if it fails.

Briefings and documentation

All those working on the event site, whether sub-contractors, employees or volunteers, should be thoroughly briefed both about their individual responsibilities, site safety issues/rules, who they should take instructions from and the communications systems being used.

This should include a communications plan explaining how communications are to operate on the site as well as who they should contact if they have a problem or need advice.

It is good practice to provide each of those working on the site with a short and clear briefing document that sets out all this information so that they have a point of reference.

While group or individual briefings can be important, particularly in making sure that everyone understands the systems that are in place, information can easily be misheard or misinterpreted. A basic briefing reference document can help to overcome this.

For those in direct contact with the public it is useful to include key information in the briefing document, such as where toilets can be found, so that questions can be quickly and easily answered. It is also helpful to include a simple site plan in the pack.

Keep it simple

Make sure briefing documents are easy to follow – ideally with a good index – and straightforward to understand. Avoid using jargon or acronyms that may not be understood.