7. Crowd Management

Even for smaller events, the management of people is an essential part of creating a safe event.

Crowd management planning is about managing the movement of people to create a safe event.

This should take account of how people are admitted to the site as well as their movements within the event through to how they exit at the end. It should also take account of how emergencies should be handled to avoid panic and other issues.

The plan should also clearly identify the different roles and responsibilities of those involved so that each (e.g. event organiser, crowd management company, police, etc) is clear about where their responsibility begins and ends.

Venue Requirements

Events, venues and their locations can be made up of a number of defining characteristics, which can individually or collectively influence crowd management.

Established venues, such as theatres, halls, arenas similar spaces, will generally have established crowd management plans but the different nature of each event will often require these to be reviewed.

Greenfield sites (open spaces such as fields) that may be used for a wide range of events. At these sites a plan will generally be needed to address all aspects of crowd management, from access routes, and site movements to underfoot conditions.

Public spaces around villages, towns and cities are often used as event spaces. These are generally operated on a free-entry basis which present their own problems for crowd management with particular attention needing to be given to access routes, queuing systems, entrances, capacities and egress routes, including how the event interfaces with public and private transport.

Audience Profile

A key issue in determining the crowd measures needed is the profile of the audience and, in some cases, the performers.

While most visit an event for entertainment and enjoyment, a small minority can undermine the experience of the majority.

Performers (e.g. music and the arts) and participants (e.g. individual and team sports) can have both a positive and negative influence on crowd movement and behaviour. For this reason it is advisable research previous history to understand the profile of performers as well as the audience they are likely to attract.

VIP guests

If VIP's are being invited to the event, the crowd management plan should also take this into account as they may need assistance getting in and out of the venue, particularly if there are long queues at the gates.

Capacities

At every event, whether it is free or paid, outdoor or indoor, there is a need to establish a safe capacity. This should include the number of people employed, contractors, guests, performers, volunteers and those that have a statutory duty to be on site. At events where those capacities are likely to be reached, it is important to establish a method for continuously counting those present to ensure it stays within the safe limits.

Where a venue is not clearly defined, such as a street festival, the event should be broken down into constituent parts. Occupant capacities can be calculated for the available space for each area based on sight lines, topography, audience profiles and needs (e.g. transport hubs).

The capacity of the venue may also be a condition on a license.

Crowd dynamics

A great deal of research has been done on crowd dynamics and it is important that event organisers take this into account when planning.

There are three main phases of crowd behavior:

- ingress (e.g. access routes, queuing space and entrances);
- circulation (e.g. concourses, space around facilities);
- egress (e.g. exit routes and exit-gate widths).

And three main influences on crowd behavior:

- design;
- information;
- management.

In considering crowd management, organisers need to take into account likely flow rates and movements together with densities, particularly in key areas.

Emergency access

Crowd management plans should also take account of how emergency services can access the site at times of high crowd density when gates and roads may be blocked.

Assessing the needs

The combination of the different types of venue with the type of event, the performer and audience profile and issues such as transport and flow rates will all help to determine what crowd control measures are needed, including the numbers of people needed for parking and managing gates as well as for stewarding or security.

The Purple Guide provides much more detailed guidance on crowd management. Organisers of smaller events should also refer to the HSEs crowd management web page at http://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/crowd-management.htm (http://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/crowd-management.htm)