



EVENTS NOVA SCOTIA

Inspiring times

CHAPTER 10: WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Problems will arise and you need to be ready to deal with them. Have a plan for different contingencies and arrangements with outside agencies for assistance when required.

Contingency Planning

Murphy's Law states "If something can go wrong, it will." While that may not always be true, it often is. The best insurance is contingency planning – having a solution at hand for each reasonably likely problem that might arise. Contingency planning is vital for a festival or event.

The kinds of problems commonly encountered at festivals, and what you can or need to arrange to be able to deal with them, include the following:

Bad weather

- Tents for programmed events
- Alternate venues for outdoor programs
- Rain day passes for attendees to return for a rescheduled performance (multi-day events)
- Refunds

Power failure

- Backup power source installed
- Emergency generator(s) on-site or on call

Equipment failure

- Standby equipment
- Spares
- Rentals on-site or on call

Robbery, vandalism

- Police in close contact

Entertainer cancellations/no-shows

- Backup entertainment/program
- Rain day passes (multi-day events)
- Refunds

Staff absences, volunteer no-shows

- Call-in backup staff
- Multi-task training

Problems of an emergency nature require more extensive arrangements.

Fire

- Fire extinguishers
- Emergency communications
- Fire engine access
- Evacuation plan

Illness, injury

- Paramedics/first aid on hand
- Emergency communications
- Ambulance access

Unruly behaviour, drunkenness

- Security personnel
- Emergency communications with police
- Holding area

Traffic problems

- Security personnel
- Parking personnel
- Police

Unauthorized entry

- Gate/access control
- Fencing, perimeter control
- Security personnel

Risk Management

Risk management is a strategic process that will improve your ability to identify, analyze, control, and, if required, deal with (i.e. through insurance coverage) risks that are associated with your festival. It is a commitment to high standards of care with respect to the health, safety, and security of your guests/visitors, employees, and volunteers. Having a well-thought-out risk management process and procedures may also assist you in obtaining insurance; in fact, it may well be a requirement for your insurance coverage.

You need to be proactive in risk management and keep well-documented records of the risk management process you follow. Have a series of checklists dealing with every aspect of your risk management process, including risks you have identified, their evaluation and prioritization, how you plan to deal with them, and your response/contingency plans.

Risk can be created by one or more of the following:

- Poor planning
- Unsafe physical conditions
- Natural events such as storms, floods
- Inadequate safety measures
- Inadequate management
- Human behaviour
- Relationships with suppliers and contracts that are not clearly defined and agreed to

The risk management process involves several steps:

Step 1: Identify the Risk

The first task is to identify all the risks that might potentially exist for your festival/event – what might happen and what the implications might be if it does.

Some municipalities have a Special Events Task Force made up of various departments that are integral to major events. These include police, EMT, power/hydro, traffic, emergency management officials, waste removal, and fire. Meeting with this task force will help you identify partners required to organize your event, and their experience will help you identify any common risks you should be aware of.

Some Aspects of Festivals and Events that might Create Risks

- *Health concerns, viruses*
- *Arrivals and parking – cars, trucks, pedestrians*
- *Crowd disturbances and controls*
- *Stages*
- *Sale of alcohol on-site*
- *Food preparation on-site*
- *Lineups*

CHAPTER 10: WHEN THINGS GO WRONG



You can also

- review historical material on the festival/event
- review written material such as contracts, relationships with suppliers and sponsors, program details, etc.
- meet/brainstorm with staff, suppliers, contractors, security/emergency personnel, etc.
- survey your festival/event site several times during both day and night (if it's an outdoor event) in the early planning stages before and during the event. This requires a careful walk through and consideration of all potential risks. Examples of things to watch out for include
 - unprotected tent stakes and ropes
 - objects protruding into walkways
 - unsecured electrical cables or boxes
 - deteriorated seating areas or loose handrails
 - poorly lit areas
 - poorly marked entrance/exit areas

Step 2: Evaluate and Prioritize the Risks

Assess the likelihood of each identified risk occurring, as well as the potential impacts and the severity of these impacts. Those that are more likely to occur and have the most significant consequences should be given the greatest attention in your planning. Your prioritization should consider the potential impacts on your visitors, staff, volunteers, and performers, as well as the potential impact on the festival/event and the resources of the event.

Step 3: Develop and Implement a Plan to Control Each Risk

Design your plan to achieve one of the following, with a) being the preferred choice:

- a) Eliminate the risk or the potential of it occurring
- b) Reduce the consequences
- c) Develop response and contingency plans to deal with the risk if something does go wrong
- d) Transfer the risk to some other group – a supplier, emergency services, etc.

Step 4: Review, Monitor, and Modify

Finally, risk management is an ongoing process, so regularly review, monitor, update, and modify as required.

Response and Contingency Plans

You will not be able to eliminate all the risks that might potentially occur so you will need to have response and contingency plans in place to follow when things do go wrong. Dealing with security and emergencies is explored later in this chapter.

Insurance

All event operators must carry insurance, regardless of the size of the festival, and you may be required to carry insurance in order to obtain some permits and licences. If you are a small festival, you may be covered under the insurance coverage of your parent/community organization or, potentially, the municipality. Or, you may be able to arrange for coverage through the municipality's policy if you are using their facilities.

Make sure that you co-insure your sponsors, the community, and other key partners and ask them to co-insure you in return. If a sponsor happens to be responsible for an accident or incident, you, as the event operator, will also be held responsible.

You will need two main types of insurance:

- General liability insurance covers claims made against your festival for bodily injury or property damage arising from your operations. This is commonly known as third-person liability insurance.
- Director's and officer's liability is important for a not-for-profit organization with a board of directors. This covers directors for wrongful acts such as wrongful dismissal and errors and omissions in the course of performing their duties while acting as a director/officer of the association. While Nova Scotia's Volunteer Protection Act does provide volunteers with some protection, you may find your board members are much more comfortable if you carry this type of insurance.

You may also want to consider the following, depending on the scope/scale of your event:

- Equipment coverage insurance protects your festival's equipment, including maintenance equipment, restaurant equipment if you operate a restaurant or canteen within the attraction, etc.
- Rain cancellation insurance is expensive but may be worth it for your event.
- Crime insurance protects you from the loss of money, securities, and other property. It is sometimes divided between losses that take place inside the business premises (such as employee dishonesty) and losses that occur outside the business premises (such as theft and robbery).

The specific types of insurance you should hold will vary according to a variety of factors, including the size and nature of your festival. Seek advice from an insurance broker about your specific requirements and needs. Remember: Your insurance costs will increase significantly if you have beer tents or any other areas with alcohol being served.

Helpful Tip: Insurance

Make sure your insurance company is familiar with your contractors' insurance. Usually they will want to see their policies to make sure you are covered as necessary.

CHAPTER 10: WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Read more in the guide “Insurance and Your Non-Profit Organization” at <https://www.novascotia.ca/finance/site-finance/media/finance/InsuranceGuideNon-Profit.pdf>.

Security, Emergencies, and First Aid

As suggested already, connect with your municipality’s Special Events Task Force to cover any issues that may arise. If your municipality does not have such a task force, connect with the parks and recreation office to suggest one be established.

Representatives could include

- local police detachment
- fire department
- paramedics
- by-law enforcement
- Nova Scotia Alcohol and Gaming Division, if you are serving alcohol
- your own security people and/or other officials responsible for the site you will be using

The objective here is to ensure everyone has the same basic information in the event of an emergency. Address issues such as site locations of concern, hours of operation, expected crowd sizes, expected problems or concerns, etc. Be sure to develop a site map (see Site Development, Chapter 8) and plan for emergency response and access, discussed below.

Once you have shared the general information about your festival and created a plan for dealing with emergencies, your task force may decide they don’t need to meet again. That will depend on the complexity of your event and level of perceived risk.

Emergency Plan

Having a plan to deal with emergencies — such as accident, evacuation, fire, medical emergency, site grid, access/egress — is critical. An evacuation and emergency plan can be as simple as having all emergency services people in your community knowing how to access the festival site on foot or by vehicle. Or, it can be a detailed undertaking. It really depends on the location of your event and the kind of crowd you expect.

Be sure your festival site map clearly indicates emergency exits, first aid stations, or any other pertinent information that may be required in an emergency.

Contact Information

Distribute a contact list with cell phone numbers or emergency numbers to all staff, volunteers, and your security team. A larger list with all contacts is useful, but a smaller list with key contacts can be taped to radios or cell phones as well. The key contact list should include emergency service numbers as well as those of key staff and volunteers.

Crisis Communications

Communications are a critical part of emergency plans. Event staff and volunteers need to know who makes the decision to implement an emergency plan, how that decision will be communicated to staff and volunteers, and to visitors, if necessary. You need a plan for communicating with emergency services personnel and for communicating within the festival staff and volunteers.

Make sure staff and volunteers are clear on whom to call in case of an emergency or crisis. A phone tree is an effective tool.

CHAPTER 10: WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Train staff and volunteers on the use of radios and/or cell phones. Most of us in our day-to-day life have no call to use a radio. They are toy-like, which can lead to mis-use. Establish operating procedures (how to use a radio, dos and don'ts on air), and encourage everyone to follow them. Remember, you never know whom the people with radios are standing next to!

Another important procedure is having a code red call for emergencies. Once a code red is called, all radio traffic conversation is to cease except for those communicating the situation. The "all quiet" remains in effect until an official staff person calls code green, meaning the situation has been dealt with and normal procedures can continue.

You can also designate a second channel for communication between two people that does not affect the festival as a whole. Staff or volunteers can ask to "go to channel 2" to discuss issues that do not need to be heard by everyone.

Crowd Management

If you have past data, you may be able to predict the kind of audience you are going to attract, the approximate number of people expected to attend, as well as the periods of peak activity. This allows you to plan for pedestrian traffic flows (entry and exit, walkway and queuing area capacities) as well as the capacities required for programmed events at different venues (seating/standing areas, number of security and service personnel).

For open, un-gated events with limited capacity due to fire regulations, having a security person at the door with a manual person counter is highly recommended.

Are you serving alcohol? Do you have any late-night activities? If yes, you will need more security personnel, particularly for evening performances.

What ages are you expecting? Youth are generally more of a challenge.

Are you expecting any "problem" crowds? Problem crowds don't necessarily mean those drinking heavily and getting out of hand. Your problem crowd could be any group with too many people competing for access and seating, for example, 500 senior citizens trying to fit into a space for 200 will most definitely be a problem. With your site plan in hand, walk your festival site and see how the crowd flow will work. Keep an eye out for

- conflicts between your entrance gate and access to toilets
- whether visitors exiting have to cross in front of the stage when the audience area fills up
- whether there are enough exits when the event is over
- what will happen if people start lining up before your gates are open
- whether lineups at the food concessions will block sight lines for the stage

Good directional signage is important. It should clearly guide people to the locations of toilets, food concessions, beverage concessions, shops, first aid, visitor services, etc.

First Aid and Paramedics

You will need to provide emergency medical services. First aid services should be situated in a common, easily identifiable location. You may require more than one area depending on the size of your event.

CHAPTER 10: WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

One option is to ensure that any staff or volunteers with advanced first aid training are on-site and accessible at all times.

Another option is to arrange for an organization that provides first aid, such as St. John Ambulance, to staff your event. Some organizations will do this for free, or for a nominal charge. Meet with emergency service professionals (fire department, police, paramedics) to get an idea of the requirements or their recommendations for first aid care at your event. They may advise you to have an ambulance and paramedics on-site during all, or part, of your event.

First aid organizations normally cannot transport patients to a hospital. That is done by emergency medical services, such as paramedics, specified ambulance companies, police, or the fire department. Working out a communications and response plan with your local emergency services organizations is essential.

Security Staff

Some events require a minimal security staff, such as a force of all volunteers with a staff person as security coordinator. Other events require a security coordinator along with paid security personnel to handle the more demanding aspects, with volunteers assisting with the more routine duties.

Having a security staff with a calm, positive attitude and professional conduct will lead to the successful outcome of most situations. Security staff can directly influence the escalation or de-escalation of emotions. Poor handling can turn a minor problem, such as a visitor insisting that they “forgot” their pass and demanding access, into a major concern. And the reverse is true; a rowdy group can be calmed with a positive but firm approach. Security personnel need to accept that all visitors are customers and should be treated accordingly, and in a courteous and respectful manner.

When choosing your security staff, keep these attributes in mind. Training security staff should include these elements, along with a clear definition of roles and communications procedures during normal day-to-day operations of the festival, as well as communications during a crisis.

Accreditation – Who Goes Where

Accreditation means authorizing different categories of people to have access to different parts of the site. You need an easy-to-understand system of controlling who goes where. Accredited people who are properly identified by uniform can also provide visitors with access to the right people for information or directions.

Accreditation is not something required only at big events; every event needs it. The complexity or simplicity of your accreditation system will vary depending on your level of need for security and control.

In assessing your accreditation system, ask yourself these questions:

- Do we care if everyone has access to everywhere?
- Are there sensitive documents, valuables, or money that will be handled and/or kept on-site?
- Will the artists expect a “closed” backstage and waiting area?
- Are festival personnel-only spaces important; if so, where and when?

Your system should make it easy to quickly recognize different categories of accredited staff, media, and volunteers, particularly for those areas accessible to visitors. Use badge colours that are distinctly different and can be distinguished even at night.

All staff need to be clear on how to deal with someone suspected of not having appropriate accreditation.

CHAPTER 10: WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Working With the Media

Communicating with the media about an emergency requires special preparation. Assign and train one or two specific people to speak with the media in such instances; this ensures your message stays consistent and limits the possibility of someone being taken off guard and out of context. Educate your staff and volunteers as to why this system is in place, and to whom they should refer media queries.

A few important pointers:

- Prepare and issue a statement as to known facts and what is being done to handle the situation.
- To the extent possible, script responses to expected questions from the media.
- Don't speculate about what has happened. If the facts are not known or are unclear, say that relevant information will be forthcoming when available.
- Many media people will attempt to force you to provide “breaking news” of an event in progress, the more sensational the better. They will ask provocative questions to elicit such a response. Respond by repeating the relevant facts in your prepared statement. Answer only those questions within the scope of your prepared statement and your prepared responses. Others should receive a “no comment” response.
- Never try to outwit an interviewer in a verbal contest. You risk saying something you shouldn't or something that can be taken out of context.
- Terminate the interview once the foregoing process concludes, with a statement as to how further communications will be handled.

Key Takeaways

Contingency planning is the first step to being ready when things go wrong. It should address all of the potential problems that might arise.

Have a risk management plan in place.

Make sure you (and your suppliers) have insurance – and the right insurance for your needs.





For more information, please contact our Events Nova Scotia staff
at Communities, Culture and Heritage at events.novascotia.ca/contact

