

Definition

Special Events - Specific presentations, performances or celebrations that mark special occasions or are used to achieve goals and objectives. These events usually fall outside the scope of normal operations

Often, organizations are involved in special events either as the event manager/operator or an event sponsor. Not-for-profit organizations often rely heavily on special events for fundraising. There are many risks associated with special events, including:

- Injury risks - Employees, volunteers, persons who attend the event, etc. may be injured during the event. These events often include high-risk activities such as alcohol service, fireworks, children's rides/games, etc.
- Reputation risks - If situations are not handled well, the organization's reputation may be damaged.
- Financial risks - Events usually require a large amount of funding. If events are not administered with care, this may affect the amount of financial support that may be received. Events may also be cancelled due to weather or other unforeseen events.

Key Point

By their nature, special events are not normal to your operations and, therefore, extra care is required to identify and minimize risks.

Legal Liability

As an occupier of a premises, you and your organization are responsible for the safety of those attending the event. Occupiers must protect patrons from all foreseeable harm. Extra precautions must be taken if:

- Alcohol is served.
- Children/minors are in attendance.
- Dangerous/hazardous activities are undertaken such as fireworks, boating, and some sports.
- Gambling is involved.
- Large crowds are in attendance.

Applicable permits should always be obtained from your municipal/provincial government to reduce liability relating to violations involving permits. Health requirements should also be followed. Contact your local government for more information regarding your responsibilities regarding special events.

Risk Management

1. Understand the risks involved in the event:

- Does the event involve physical activities?
 - Performing physical activities may require medical examination forms, waivers and/or informed consent to be completed.
- Is food served at the event?
 - Additional risks exist when food is cooked and/or served, such as employee/volunteer injuries (burns, etc.), food poisoning, fires, etc.
- Is traveling required? If so, what type of transportation will be used (e.g., bus, automobile, plane, etc.)?
 - Risks associated with travelling include transportation accidents (collisions, etc.), delays, passenger safety, etc.
- Is the event outdoors?
 - Consider such risks as weather (make contingency plans) and use of temporary structures.
- Will alcohol be served?
 - More risks are involved with patron and public safety when alcohol is served. See Liquor Liability for more information.
- Are there any activities that may be contracted out?
 - Contracting may decrease control and decrease risk. However, in order for risk to be effectively transferred, an appropriate contract, including a hold harmless and indemnification clause, must be drafted. The third party should have the financial resources to cover losses that may occur (or purchase insurance). Other conditions may be required for risk to be effectively transferred. Consult a lawyer for more details.
 - You may want to sign a hold harmless and indemnification agreement stating that the organizers will not be responsible for property damage and/or injuries and that the third party will indemnify the organizers for any claims due to the third party's negligence. Consult a lawyer for more information.
 - Request an insurance certificate from the contractor as evidence of liability insurance. Make sure the insurance certificate names your organization as an additional insured and that it also contains a cross-liability clause. Consult an insurance representative for more information.
- Will there be minors attending the event?
 - Occupiers owe a higher standard of care to minors. Often, events with minors in attendance require more supervision and security.
- Is there cash stored on the premises?

Key Point

Make sure that you know and understand all of the risks associated with your event and take steps to prevent or mitigate them.

Key Point

It is very important to contact your insurance representative for all special events, because these events are not a normal part of your operations.



- Financial management procedures must be considered if cash is present. Theft is a serious issue.
2. Facilities should be appropriate for the event and may not be appropriate if they prevent your event from occurring. For example, bad weather, inadequate space for participants or lack of equipment may prevent an event from occurring.
 3. Contact your insurance representative. Let him/her know all the details of the event and get confirmation that the event is covered. If not, purchase insurance and/or ensure all parties/organizations involved in the event have purchased insurance.
 4. Design a site map. The site map should identify all exits and entrances, first-aid stations, temporary structures, beer gardens, barricades/pylons/fencing, portable washrooms, fireworks, emergency vehicle access, food/merchandise vendors, etc.
 5. Implement crowd control and other security measures.
 - The level of security needed will vary depending on the type of event and the kind of audience that is attracted.
 - Have security guards patrol the area. Require security guards to carry and show identification cards.
 - Consider the use of photo ID badges for staff and volunteers.
 - Create a policy to allow removal of patrons that may cause harm to others.
 - Use video surveillance. Keep in mind privacy restrictions.
 6. Create contingency plans for emergency situations (e.g., out of control crowd, fire, power failure, poor weather, etc.)
 7. Place signage indicating:
 - the location of the closest first-aid station;
 - the location of the closest emergency exits; and
 - the location of the closest security office.
 8. Place trashcans around the area to discourage people from littering. Litter may cause people to slip and fall.
 9. Implement a financial management system. Create cash handling and payment procedures.
 10. Consider implementing a program for helping lost children find their parents/guardians.

11. Screen and hire appropriate employees and volunteers.
12. Train employees and volunteers. Keep detailed records of the shifts and locations for which employees/volunteers are responsible.
13. Ensure communication devices (such as two-way radios or a public announcement system) are installed and used by employees/volunteers.
14. Allow patrons to provide feedback and complaints. This can help your organization plan for the next special event.
15. Assess the event afterward.
 - Determine if risk management techniques were used.
 - Determine if those techniques were effective.
 - Consider whether there were any unforeseen problems and how they could be prevented in the future.
 - Consider whether or not the event should be held again and what improvements should be made.

Additional Resources

Refer to the information in “Protecting Yourself from the Liabilities of Others.”

Refer to your municipality’s website for more information regarding special events applications, permits, etc.

Sample Special Events Policy

Inception Date: _____

Revision Dates: _____

Approved By: _____

Purpose

To ensure that all special events are conducted with the utmost concern for safety and loss prevention. Special events are important to our organization so they must be conducted in a way that maximizes their benefits while reducing their risk and cost.

Policy Details

1. All events will be carefully assessed for cost, benefits and risk to the organization.
2. Events will be chosen based on prescribed selection criteria.
3. Events will be managed by a responsible and experienced person who will be given full operational authority for the event.
4. All activities at the event will be carefully considered for their potential risk, and any activity that is deemed to be high risk will not be considered.
5. Any events involving alcohol service will conform to our alcohol service policy.
6. All appropriate authorities will be contacted and all regulations strictly followed. Examples include: the municipality, the liquor control board, the fire department, the occupational health and safety authority, the food service authority, etc.
7. Event security and crowd control will be contracted out to qualified, bonded and insured companies.
8. First-aid and emergency response procedures will be in place and strictly enforced.
9. All contractors or service providers will be experienced, qualified and adequately insured, and our organization will be added as an additional insured on their policy.
10. Our insurance representative will be consulted on all events at least 30 days in advance of the event date.

Responsibilities

All employees/volunteers are responsible for abiding by this policy.