

2. Managing the crowd

Although the majority of the crowd presented at an event are likely to be made up of participants who come to observe and to peacefully enjoy whatever it is that is happening the presence of undesirable elements such as predators in search of victims, and people with other psychological or social agendas must also be considered. It is efficacious that in order to manage the crowd accurately a monitoring system must be put in place to ensure there is also a constant watch on activities. It may be that a proactive type of management is also required, anticipating and resolving problems before they occur rather than after they occur. You are responsible for ensuring that this occurs.

Does your type of event predispose it to certain negative crowd issues which might negatively impact on participants? e.g.

- rock concerts can create certain problems with youth abuse of alcohol and/or illicit drugs, and in some cases, even weapons
- religious / 'healing' events can attract an inordinate number of the ill or infirm or handicapped, thus increasing the potential for on-site medical/health related emergencies
- certain sports events can attract over-reactive supporters and hooligan acts
- events for senior citizens can often increase the number of medical crisis at the events as opposed to a younger, and healthier section of the population.

Monitoring crowd behaviour is an *essential* aspect of any crowd management system because it advises you whether the systems you have in place are working and also it enables you too detect if there are potential problems at an early stage and deal with them.

When thinking about monitoring requirements you need to consider the following:

- how quickly could crowding develop to a dangerous level in various areas inside the venue?
- how quickly could you respond to crowding problems e.g. by preventing more people coming in or by dispersing people from overcrowded areas?
- if a crowding incident occurred, how would you get to know about it so that you could deal with the incident itself and prevent any escalation?

It will help you to answer 'yes' to the questions in the previous paragraph if you can position Staff in the crowd so that they can:

- sense atmospheres, tensions, moods etc.
- look out for signs of distress
- respond quickly to incidents and accidents
- quash any *dangerous* behaviour (e.g. jumping on seats, climbing up scaffolding for a better view) quickly before it spreads
- help people, deal with queries etc

- discourage dangerous behaviour by their very presence.

2.1.4 ESTIMATING A CROWD

When monitoring the distribution of people, the following are useful indices:

- space between people
- estimations of “raw” numbers of people e.g. making a rough count of people in a relatively small identifiable area (e.g. numbers inside an area bounded by 4 columns) which can be scaled up; roughly calculating the length times breadth of queues between identifiable sections which can be scaled up (e.g. between fence posts etc); and the rate of flow into or out of an area (i.e., the number of people which passed a marked object)
- behavioural changes; look out for actual signs or it’s signs; pushing, surging, shouting or similar indications of bad temper or excitement, or all of the latter.

2.1.5 WAYS OF MONITORING

You may wish to decide at the planning stage how you are going to monitor the crowds. This could include:

- closed circuit television - this may range from a few fixed cameras at 1 or 2 exits to the use of a large number of remote-control cameras with zoom lenses. CCTV allows an overview of sections such as entrances, departure routes and problem areas to be relayed to a central control point;
- patrolling the venue - where crowding problems are likely to develop slowly at particular points within the venue, staff may be given specific areas to check at regular intervals; and
- watching crowds from a fixed point - can be carried out as a specific task or, where manpower is short, at the same time as the performance of other duties such as checking tickets. Good vantage points are needed:

2.1.6 PROBLEM AREAS

When you have decided on the methods to be used, think about the areas where crowds are likely to build up. Your organization may wish to take into consideration how to deal with crowding problems and your monitoring could be designed to trigger planned measures. Problem areas might include: bottlenecks (e.g. stairs, escalators, bridge links between halls); areas where people queue (pay desks, ordering and information points); popular stalls, attractions or exhibits; and refreshment areas.

It is considered appropriate to ask yourself about the likelihood and consequences of any sudden crowd movements such could happen (e.g. invasions of the stage or pitch, mobbing of celebrities, running between various vantage points). In each case, decide how best to monitor and control this sort of behaviour. It might involve: training staff to be on the look out for certain types of “behaviour”; laying down rules for visitors on what sort of behaviour is acceptable and what is not, together with the penalties for unacceptable behaviour, and drawing up procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

Some suggestions which you could consider implementing:

- identify supervisors and Crowd Controllers by use of jackets, arm bands, or badges, and expect them to be active and visible to discourage problems quickly identified

- expect / encourage management personnel, supervisors and security people to avoid becoming too involved in watching the event and to be observant, active and consistent in applying rules and procedures.