

# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

## Industry Strong

*I will always regret when I have to use this column to reflect upon or address a senseless tragedy like the bombings that we witnessed during the Boston Marathon on April 15th, 2013. We are an industry of celebration; an industry that has brought more people(s) together – peacefully – than any other in history. We are an industry that encourages and succeeds at getting people around the world to safely lower their personal barriers; to explore new cultures, foods, languages, customs and experiences; and to participate actively in events that bring our communities, cities and countries closer together. We are an industry that represents who we are at our best, which makes it seem so much more out-of-place when such a diametrically opposite concept like the Boston Marathon bombings is inserted into that reality.*



Following the attacks of 9/11 we all understood that the world around us had changed for everyone. Our events were given the label of 'soft targets,' operating in public spaces and venues, with high media visibility, and limited abilities to control all of the people and elements that had/have always been at the core of the energy created by the live festival and event experience. At the same time, our events provided the logical outlets for people to continue gathering to show their support for those affected by global tragedies and to underline our continuation of 'normalcy' that we will not allow anyone to take away.

While we have all certainly changed many of our planning/operating processes and raised our awareness levels over the last twelve years, we have been very fortunate that there have not been any successful terrorism efforts aimed specifically at events. While we knew the possibility existed, we have also been somewhat lulled by time into a false sense of security...until April 15th, 2013.

Watching that day as live coverage streamed onto every computer in our office, we did our best to grasp what was occurring. Like planes flying into the World Trade Center in New York City, the concept of someone purposely doing harm to innocent people, at such a community-bonding event, seemed unimaginable. But as we watched the tragic images unfold, we were also watching the positive results of past lessons learned.

Event team, law enforcement, and medical personnel quickly began working their risk management plans,

setting aside hopes that they would never have to be deployed beyond table-top exercises in operational meetings.

Government officials and media began broad communication efforts, ranging from reaction on-site to prevention of further incidents elsewhere until more details could be confirmed as to what was occurring. The Department of Homeland Security reached out to the IFEA as the Sector Specific Agency whose industry had just been targeted and, together with our Association Alliance Partners (an Alliance formed following the attacks of 9/11 when we realized our mutual need to communicate quickly and clearly with one another following such events), we were able to quickly disseminate tools, resources and information (many which had also been created as part of our common response to 9/11) to industry leaders across the country and around the world, who were, in-turn, able to respond appropriately and quickly with their own event teams, in their own communities.

Law enforcement investigators used past lessons learned and new tools and resources of their own to piece together and kill or capture those responsible for the bombings in less than five days...a remarkable accomplishment by any standard...giving everyone a little more peace of mind and likely preventing further attacks.

Under unimaginable circumstances, all systems and past lessons learned seemed to have worked, and that can be counted a success. We now know, however unfortunately tested, that all of our planning was not for naught and we have been awakened once again to the stark realities of our new

world, where the same instant communications and technology that allowed us to respond so effectively, also provided detailed instructions for constructing the IED's used by the bombers.

Without taking away events altogether, we will never be able to control every possible scenario. There will always be risk. But we will learn still more lessons from this incident; we will engage in more dialogue, more planning, more training, and in creating still more resources and tools to help us aim for that elusive 100% prevention goal. We will work more closely with all of our participants and attendees to make them part of our efforts to build 'safe havens' where we can all come together to celebrate who we are at our best.

To pay tribute to those who lost their lives; who lost family or friends; who were harmed or injured in the bombings; and who bravely stepped forward at so many levels to help; we must recommit ourselves to further strengthening our own events, risk management plans, training and communications systems, and partnerships. The IFEA will play our role in that commitment to help 'raise all boats' and to ensure that we are there to support when you need us the most.

If we commit ourselves to these things, taking a page from those who have declared themselves, rightfully and proudly so, as "Boston Strong", we can ensure that we are, together, "Industry Strong."

I wish you all a season of safe and uneventful events.