THE IMPORTANCE OF

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANNING FOR FESTIVALS

Contrary to popular belief, emergency preparedness planning isn't the sexiest part of event planning but it is certainly a necessity. More often than not, preparedness is "uncomfortable" because it requires the event planner to anticipate different types of disasters and assemble necessary resources needed to provide safety for all people in attendance at the event. This article will focus on the Incident Action Plan (IAP) (also known as an Event Action Plan (EAP) a preparedness tool that is often referred to as the "play book". It can be written to fit the scope and needs of your event as well as produce several resources or best practices used to manage your event and communicate with attendees.

After being issued a Presidential directive by President George W. Bush on February 28, 2003, the Department of Homeland Security released the National Incident Management System (NIMS) on March 1, 2004. NIMS is a systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, non governmental organizations, and the private sector to work together seamlessly and manage incidents involving all threats and hazards regardless of cause, size, location or complexity in order to reduce loss of life, property and harm to the environment. One of the five (5) components used often in the event industry is the Incident Command System (ICS). ICS is a fundamental element of event management that provides systematic organization through a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, and communications using consistent terminology and a pre-determined organizational structure.

I was first introduced to NIMS and the Emergency Preparedness process described within NIMS when I worked for Arizona State University (ASU) producing their large scale student events. While it wasn't a requirement, I found that the use of an Event Action Plan (EAP) provided a consistent form of communication, streamlined accountability and created a

unified approach to executing the events. I learned a lot about the effectiveness and necessity for having an event plan from ASU's Director of Emergency Preparedness. In November 2014, I left ASU and joined the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee as a member of the Operations and Logistics team. Our team served as a key stakeholder and contributor to the City of Phoenix Emergency Preparedness department and their event plan for the most popular professional sporting event in the world. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of people that visited the valley for Super Bowl XLIX, the Waste Management Phoenix Open (yielding 200,000+ attendees annually) occurred the same weekend.

An Event Action Plan (EAP) is a comprehensive document created from individual ICS forms used to assist in systemizing information from local, state and federal agencies, in an effort to execute a successful event. Below is a list of the ICS and supplementary forms that I use when producing events of any size.

A popular ICS method of streamlining communications during an event is to create a Command Post. The Command Post serves as the centralized communications hub for the entire event. A typical Command Post consists

of Police, Fire, Medical, Security, Public Information Officer (PIO), and a member of the team producing the event that has decision making authority. All radio calls run through the Command Post in order to effectively dispatch resources to the appropriate locations in a timely fashion.

In addition to local and state agencies, the Federal Government has assets available for large scale events that traditionally draw or anticipate a large number of attendees. Through the coordination by local and/or state law enforcement agencies, the Office of Infrastructure Protection within the Department of Homeland Security is able to connect event personnel with Federal resources that are available at your disposal for FREE. That's right, the resources provided by the Federal Government are FREE! If deemed appropriate, here are a few of the resources that are available to you:

Infrastructure Visualization Platform (IVP):

A tactical multimedia tool that creates an interactive visual guide of any location by integrating various types of data. The IVP generates 360-degree geo-spherical video and panoramic geospatial imagery of facilities, surrounding areas, transportation routes, and other features of interest to provide emergency response personnel and critical infrastructure owners and operators with a cross-platform tool that allows them to present data, make quick and informed decisions, and confidently respond to an incident. The information resulting from an IVP assessment is provided in an interactive IVP Report, which incorporates a wide variety of data, including evacuation plans, standard operating procedures, geospatial and aerial facility views, schematic/floor plans, and vulnerability assessments. *(Formerly, the Computer-Based Assessment Tool or CBAT.)*

Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN):

HSIN is the encrypted network for homeland security mission operations to share Sensitive but Unclassified information with other Federal, State, Local, Territorial, Tribal, International, and Private Sector partners. These groups use HSIN to manage operations, analyze data, send alerts and notices, and in general, share the information they need to do their job.

Tabletop Exercises:

As part of the preparedness cycle, planners and event personnel can participate in tabletop exercises that simulate different disasters that can occur

ICS FORMS	WHAT IS IT?
Title Page	This helps to identify the name of the event, provide a graphic that identifies the event and shows the date and time of the event.
ICS 201	Captures vital information prior to the implementation of the formal planning process.
ICS 202	Contains the objectives, weather info, general safety message and a table of contents used to paint a broad stroke picture of what ICS documents will be included.
ICS 203	Full accounting of incident management and supervisory staff helping to shape the hierarchy and assist with creating the ICS 207 (org chart).
ICS 204	Breaks down each of the divisions and groups with specific assigned resources and identifies the supervisor and number of personnel assigned to them. This assists with managing the span of control (the number of people a person can effectively supervise). It also outlines specific duties and responsibilities in addition to being used as a "briefing sheet" for the personnel assigned to those areas. An Event Operation Plan or addendum of any kind can be used if the responsibilities are too large for the fillable portion of the form. Groups and Divisions are used to describe work responsibilities and may include areas like; law enforcement, fire, medical, volunteers, sanitation, etc.
ICS 205	Provides a detailed understanding as to the radio frequency assignments for all divisions/groups. An ICS 205T is a roster inclusive of all working personnel's e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers.
ICS 206	Presents the event's Medical Plan inclusive of nearest hospitals, locations of First-Aid resources and landing instructions for helicopters, if applicable.
ICS 207	The 207 is an illustrated org chart to outline the hierarchy reporting structure to support the ICS 203.
ICS 208	Extends the Safety Message and identifies any potential threats for the overall event.
Event Operations Plan	The EOP is completed as a supplement to the ICS 204 that provides more detail for briefing information that may need to be explained more in depth.
Onsite Event Contact List	Augments the ICS 205T and is made into a lanyard containing contact information for essential personnel. The lanyard allows for easy and immediate access in the event of an emergency.
Operational Layout	Operational layout provides geographical locations for all of the important parts of the event. It also helps to identify where the most people are anticipated or expected as a part of what is happening on the event footprint. For example; a command post, lost and found, lost parents areas, and staging area's that could be identified on the layout
Golf Cart Access Routes Map	If applicable, this map will illustrate the authorized routes for golf carts (and other vehicular travel) to travel before, during and after the event. In most cases, if it can be avoided, operating golf carts during the hours of the event increases the amount of potential risk for injury so we attempt to avoid this action.
Emergency Vehicle Access Map	Provides medical response teams with critical information so they know how to efficiently access the footprint if responding to an emergency.
Security Deployment	Usually presented as a dot map, this map helps identify where security and law enforcement resources are located in case they need to be redeployed to other areas of the event.
Operations Schedule	A chronological timeline of events that includes items like; load in/out of all equipment, vendors and infrastructure. The timeline can also capture arrival and anticipated departure times for groups and division along with important locations like; security personnel, briefing locations, the command post and, pre/post event arrival and departures. arrival, briefing, post and check out times.
Production Timeline	This timeline includes artist performance times, fireworks, opening ceremony, etc. Anything that you expect the guests to participate in while during the open hours of the event.
Credential Board	The credential board is a display of all display credentials that provides an explanation of the areas personnel are authorized to access. Other credentials needing to be included would be parking passes, wristbands, golf cart passes, etc.

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during the event. In order to make it engaging and worthwhile, the exercise director can divide the room based on areas of responsibility (Police, Fire, Metro Transportation, Promoter, Security, etc.) or put multiple disciplines at the same table. The intent when dividing by area of responsibility is that groups will have to physically move to other tables within the room to gather intel that impacts them and ultimately leads to relationship building and the understanding of responsibilities. If done correctly, this can be an extremely impactful way to assure everyone is working from the same plan.

Welcome Voiceovers:

Pre-record welcome messages reminding your guests to locate the exits closest to them. Often integrated with other messaging, the intent is to get attendees "thinking" about what to do during an emergency.

Video Screens:

Often used in conjunction with voiceovers, slides and/or images direct people to remain calm and make their way towards the nearest exit. Colors that incite fear ("red" or "orange") should be avoided as they might misrepresent the situation and cause panic or unrest among your guests.

If You See Something, Say Something Campaign:

This is a national campaign that raises public awareness of the indicators of terrorism and terrorism-related crime, as well as the importance of reporting suspicious activity to state and local law enforcement.

Emergency Texting System (ETS):

Similar to what you see in most large public stadiums and arenas, employing an emergency texting system will not only benefit the guests but also personnel as a backup communication system. An ETS vendor can establish a keyword that is promoted around the venue

for guests to use in order to identify issues happening around them. It is congruent with the national "If You See Something, Say Something " campaign. Additionally, working personnel can utilize the system in the event their radio communication becomes unavailable as a mechanism to communicate back to the Command Post.

Personnel Roles/Responsibilities:

All personnel, whether volunteer or paid staff, should be given a role to assist in the event of an emergency. Briefings are critical for relaying roles and responsibilities to all staff and should include emergency procedures to be followed in case of an emergency. In most cases, your emergency messaging will include reminding guests to follow the direction of event staff so they must know what to do. Remind all staff to remain at their posts unless their life is in danger or until given instructions to leave by the Command Post.

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP):

This is a contingency plan that addresses how an organization will continue operations during a threat or actual incident, such as a natural disaster, terrorist attack, or other emergency or incident, in which the organization's primary operating facility is rendered inoperable or is compromised in some way.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO MY EVENTS?

Disasters at a local, national or even global scale can sometimes have an impact on events close to home. The Indiana State Fair Stage Collapse of 2011 and the Oklahoma State Homecoming Parade 2015 are two examples of how disasters can reshape different processes and procedures for preparedness. The Boston Marathon bombing was also an event that shook the nation. One of the reasons so many people

survived that horrific event was because many of the runners/workers and law enforcement/first responders were prior military or in the medical field and were trained in Tactical Emergency Care, in particular applying tourniquets and dressing to open wounds. While you can't anticipate the type of emergency, if an evacuation is necessary, think of the various resources you have at your disposal and utilize them accordingly.

While preparing an EAP is not the most exciting part of event planning (for some), I guarantee you it is worthwhile and will help calm the chaos that will ensue if something happens. As a professional event producer, ignorance is not bliss. Remember, the people attending your event assume you have thought of everything and have a plan in place to protect them if something happens. You owe it to your staff, volunteers and attendees to be as prepared as possible and able to alter your plan in a moments notice if necessary.

For more information about Emergency Preparedness and Incident Command System, I encourage you to look into training offered by FEMA (training.fema.gov). The training will help you gain a better perspective and assist with preparedness. While you won't be able to prepare for everything that happens, knowing what to do and who to contact "in the event of" is what separates event planners and event professionals.

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