

WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT™

By Peter Ashwin

Securing our Events: New Security Challenges in an Uncertain World

In today's uncertain world of evolving risks from transnational terrorism, home grown violent extremism, natural hazards and financial challenges, it's never been as important for host cities and event organizers to adopt a holistic, risk based approach to event and festival planning.

The recent terrorist attacks conducted by radicalized individuals directed or inspired by ISIL during Bastille Day in Nice, France and the Breitscheidplatz Christmas Market in Berlin, Germany highlight the increasing risk of hostile vehicle attacks directed at crowds and places of mass gatherings during our festivals and events. This recent evolution in security threats has placed additional pressure on event organizers and their respective Law Enforcement and Public Safety partners to safeguard event participants and spectators from spontaneous attacks not previously anticipated.

The challenge we now collectively face is how do we balance the requirement for enhanced security measures to mitigate current and future risks against the escalating cost of these measures versus the impact on attendee experience?

From my experience, the most effective approach to this challenge is to adopt an integrated approach to event risk management through early engagement with your safety and security stakeholders including City planners, Federal agencies, local law enforcement, Fire and EMS. Developing your all hazards risk management framework in cooperation with your stakeholders ensures that event risks are identified, appropriately mitigated (control measures appropriate to the risk) and owned by the right stakeholders.

This approach also provides early warning to the event organizing committee regarding what risk based security measures will be implemented to safely secure the event. This allows you to make informed decisions earlier in the event planning cycle and to designate contingency funds for security measures which are costed for budget proposes but not implemented unless there is a change in the event security risk profile.

Given the recent focus on the protecting crowded places (events) from terrorist hostile vehicle attacks, I would like to share with you some of the strategies we

implemented during previous Olympic Games to address this risk. The following strategies are cost effective solutions to reduce the vulnerability of crowded places to hostile vehicle attacks as opposed to more permanent and expensive vehicle barrier solutions.

- Designating a Controlled Access Zone – implementing “soft measures” to restrict traffic flows close to the event location through road closures and restricted parking during specific event hours. Vehicle access is controlled by vehicle check points (VCPs) jointly staffed by security and event transport staff to ensure only authorized vehicle and drivers (identity checks) are allowed access into the zone.
- Designated Event Security Zone – implementing “hard measures” to prevent high speed vehicle approaches to crowded places through chicanes (traffic calming measures to reduce speed) and positioning of vehicle barriers (concrete or water filled) and large vehicles to block/stop vehicles.
- Implementing an Event Master Delivery Schedule - an operational process to ensure only verified suppliers, drivers, vehicles and deliveries can access the Controlled Area Zone through designated vehicle check points.
- Training of security staff to identify and report suspicious behavior and hostile reconnaissance activities prior to the event.
- Joint tabletop exercises (risk based scenarios) with all primary stakeholders to validate the event security plan including the protocols for command, control and communications during an incident. The other key benefit from tabletop exercise is that they are a great team building activity.

The strategies that I have highlighted also mitigate the known risk from vehicles driving into crowds (drivers without hostile intent) e.g. the 2014 South by Southwest (SXSW) festival where a drunk driver while trying to evade a traffic stop, drove his car into a crowd of festival attendees resulting in four deaths and 21 injured attendees.

Finally, I would like to address the importance of the pre-event safety and

security communications strategy. This communications strategy should be jointly developed by the event communications / marketing team with respective Police and City public information officers to advise attendees and the general public about any enhanced security measures for the event and provide reassurance that the event will be safe, secure and enjoyable.

While securing crowded places at events and festivals will continue to be a challenge for event organizing committees for the foreseeable future, implementing an effective risk management strategy will minimize the likelihood and consequences of identified risks, leading to safer events which are more resilient and more likely to rapidly recover from a crisis or emergency.

Peter Ashwin is the Principal at Event Risk Management Solutions in Boise, Idaho / Gold Coast, Australia. Peter Ashwin is an accomplished security and risk management consultant within the international major events environment. He is an innovative leader and project manager who successfully navigates complex, multi-agency environments to deliver effective integration strategies to align and integrate Event Organizing Committees with Government Security Authorities, Police and the private security sector. Peter's diverse range of skills have been developed through 15 plus years of security planning & operational management for mega events, including the Baku 2015 European Games, ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 (Australia/NZ), six Olympic Games from 2000 - 2012, the 2010 G8 & G20 Summit (Toronto), supplemented by his experience as an Australian Army Special Forces officer. Peter is a regular lecturer and author on Major Event Security and Event Risk Management. In 2015, Peter was invited to join the International Festivals and Events Association (IFEA) World Board of Directors. Peter is based in Boise, Idaho but still calls Australia "home".