

Focus On... Safety Special Event Planning

By Alan E. Achatz, CCM, CHE



Alan E. Achatz,
CCM, CHE

You can plan the most spectacular event for your members and guests, yet event planners must ask themselves: “What would I do in case of an emergency?” “What would the staff do?”

For the purpose of this article, we will draw an interesting event planning parallel by comparing the various facets of developing an emergency plan to planning a wedding. (Of course, we could substitute any of the other events listed in the new PCS Signature Item – *Club Programming and Event Management*.)

Obviously, any plan starts with the uniqueness of your facility; then add your employees; the employee’s skill sets; the menu of unexpected “special” events that can occur (e.g., fire, flood, power failure, etc.); equipment needed (e.g., flashlights, generators, radios, etc.); budgeted items versus desires; and finally consider what has happened previously at your locale.

We all know that no two weddings are alike; ergo, it can be said that no two emergency action plans will be identical. There may be geographic commonalities, yet each plan can be as distinct as a thumb print.

For comparative purposes, here are some of the components of your plan:

- **The Manager** – He or she can also be the wedding planner/special “events” coordinator.

- **The Menu** – Consider the various calamities that can befall the operation (e.g., ice/snow storms, earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, civil unrest, etc.).
- **Invitations** – We will consider all the people who are affected by the event as the invited attendees (i.e., members/guests/employees/first responders/vendors).
- **Table Diagram** – The parallel to the wedding table diagram layout is the facility diagram. Have you determined where the staff will assemble for roll call?
- **Place Cards** – It is always easy to see who is absent at a wedding just by looking at the table setting place cards. Yet, what are the departmental roll call procedures? How will you know to tell the fire marshal that Suzy from the kitchen staff is not present if you haven’t determined the roll call areas?
- **Pre-Event Plan** – Obviously, a great deal of effort goes into the planning and communication of the various details to the staff, which is essential to the success of the event.
- **Handicap Access** – All architects make plans for people to enter the operation, yet what plans have you made to ensure that everyone (including those in wheel chairs) gets out?
- **Flowers** – You can’t forget the flowers. The omission of a detail such as table decorations is obvious to everyone.

Developing an emergency plan and failing to conduct drills is similar to not putting flowers on the tables.

- **Thank You Notes** – After the wedding is over, thank you notes are sent. Once your “event” is over, you should review the entire process and determine what can be improved the next time around. Did the staff respond as anticipated? Is additional equipment needed? Did we think of everything that could have gone wrong?

Closing Thoughts

Obviously, this analogy is an oversimplification. There are innumerable other considerations that have to be included in your emergency plan to ensure the safety of your members, guests and employees.

Before you start to develop your plan, recognize that there is a lot of work to do. Start with management/board commitment, add employee involvement, conduct a hazard assessment, continue with education and training, and then evaluate and work on improving what you have already done. The benefits of a well-developed plan are readily evident after you have extended the effort.

Alan E. Achatz, CCM, CHE, is a former club manager who assists businesses with safety matters, including emergency action plan implementation and drills, OSHA compliance and food safety. Alan may be reached at (716) 565-9122 or via his website at www.clubsafetysolutions.com.

Emergencies That Can Occur

Natural Disasters

- Avalanche
- Biological
- Drought
- Dust/Sand Storms
- Earthquakes
- Extreme Heat/Cold
- Fire
- Flood
- Hurricane/Tsunami
- Landslide/Mudslide
- Lightning Strike
- Snow/Ice/Hail
- Tornado
- Volcanic Eruption
- Windstorm

Technological

- Aircraft Crash
- Structural Collapse
- Business Interruption
- Communication Breakdown/Failure
- Dam/Levee Failure
- Explosions/Fire
- Extreme Air Pollution
- Financial Collapse
- Fuel/Resource Shortage
- Hazardous Material Release
- Power/Utility Failure
- Radiological/Nuclear Accidents
- Strikes
- Transportation Accidents

Human

- Arson
- Civil Unrest
- Economic
- Enemy Attack
- General Strike
- Hostage Situation
- Mass Hysteria
- Sabotage
- Special Events
- Terrorism
- War
- Workplace Violence