



# MASS GATHERINGS

## Security Awareness for Soft Targets and Crowded Places

A mass gathering occurs when a large number of people come together in a particular location for a specific purpose. These locations, especially those associated with large crowds, could be an attractive target for terrorism and other crimes. By connecting with local authorities, developing plans to identify issues and support incident response, training staff and volunteers, and reporting concerns to emergency authorities, many incidents may be mitigated or avoided.

In local communities, DHS Protective Security Advisors (PSAs) work with federal, state, and local government officials and private sector partners to protect soft targets and crowded places. In doing so, PSAs encourage businesses to "Connect, Plan, Train, and Report". Applying these four steps in advance of an incident or attack can help better prepare businesses and their employees to proactively think about the role they play in the safety and security of their businesses and communities.

### 1) CONNECT

- ▶ Develop relationships with local law enforcement, fire response, and other businesses in the area.
- ▶ Clarify emergency response responsibilities and other responsibilities related to venue security and emergency response.
- ▶ Share information regarding the event and supporting venue layout with local law enforcement, fire response, and emergency management.

### 2) PLAN

- ▶ Develop plans for security, emergency response, emergency communications, and business continuity.
- ▶ Develop a bomb threat management plan to enable informed decisions and appropriate actions upon receipt of a bomb threat or discovery of suspicious items.
- ▶ Establish procedures for evacuating the venue in the event that a threat is deemed too serious to continue the event.
- ▶ Implement a communication process to inform event attendees of actions to take in case of an emergency and develop scripts for public address announcements.

### 3) TRAIN

- ▶ Train staff and volunteers on:
  - Security basics, emergency response, emergency communications, and business continuity plans.
  - Staying aware of any suspicious behavior, activities, or items.
  - The "Run, Hide, Fight" response to an active shooter incident and the "Recognize, Avoid, Isolate, and Notify" process when confronting suspicious items or packages.

### 3) TRAIN (CONT'D)

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- ▶ Provide specialized training for employees who will take additional response actions (e.g., using fire extinguishers, administering first aid).
- ▶ Conduct exercises to ensure plans remain applicable, and involve first responders in the exercises to familiarize them with the venue and its security plans, policies, and procedures.

### 4) REPORT

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- ▶ Post details on reporting suspicious activity, and encourage staff, volunteers, vendors, and the general public to report suspicious behavior to property management security or local law enforcement.
- ▶ Promote general awareness to identify:
  - Potential surveillance; excessive study of event entrances, exits, security features (e.g., cameras or barriers), or personnel; and unexplained use of binoculars, cameras, and recording devices near an event location.
  - Repeat visitors or outsiders who have no apparent business in restricted areas.
  - Erratic vehicle operation, repeated driving near an event location, and parking in the same area over multiple days with no reasonable explanation.
  - Abandoned parcels, suitcases, backpacks, and packages.
  - Bulky or unseasonable clothing.
  - Other unusual behavior, activities, or items.
- ▶ Establish a system for reporting security concerns.

## PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Mass gatherings — either in the form of indoor events or outdoor gatherings — can take place in many different formats and configurations. The following protective measures provide some basic actions to be considered by those responsible for the safety and security of these locations.

### PHYSICAL SECURITY

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- ▶ Post signage relating to emergency entry and exit points, first-aid stations, and shelter locations.
- ▶ Post signage identifying items that patrons are prohibited from carrying into the venue.
- ▶ Define the perimeter and areas that require access control for pedestrians and vehicles, and identify especially sensitive or critical areas (e.g., control rooms, communications centers, computer server rooms, fuel or chemical storage tanks, mechanical equipment) that require special access controls.
- ▶ Evaluate vehicle traffic patterns near the venue and implement strategies to reduce vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian safety.
- ▶ To the extent possible, keep vehicles at a safe distance from areas where large numbers of people congregate and consider whether fixed or temporary vehicle barriers are needed.
- ▶ Monitor all vehicles approaching an entrance or gathering of people for signs of threatening or suspicious behavior (e.g., unusually high speed, vehicles riding particularly low, vehicles emitting a chemical odor, occupants keeping the windows open even in cold or inclement weather).

# ACCESS, PLANNING, AND PERSONNEL

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- ▶ Conduct background checks on all staff assigned to critical or sensitive areas.
- ▶ Review personnel files of recently terminated employees to determine whether they pose a security risk.
- ▶ Devise credential systems that indicate areas of access and purpose of activity on the premises.
- ▶ Design a monitoring, surveillance, and inspection program that is consistent with venue operations and associated security requirements. If surveillance cameras are used, train personnel to interpret video and identify potential security-related events.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▶ Hometown Security Initiative: <https://www.dhs.gov/hometown-security>
- ▶ Active Shooter Preparedness Program: <https://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness>
- ▶ “If You See Something, Say Something®”: <https://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something>
- ▶ Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative: <https://nsi.ncirc.gov/>
- ▶ Protective Security Advisors (PSAs) proactively engage with government partners and the private sector to protect critical infrastructure. For more information or to contact your local PSA, e-mail [NICC@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:NICC@hq.dhs.gov).

Information courtesy of



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