January 2024

**Large Event Planning Annex**

Large events have the potential to impact our rural Vermont region. Unlike larger urban centers, rural areas may have trouble with sudden influxes of people attending large events such as concerts, performances, festivals, natural phenomena, etc. This annex will prompt towns to consider how large events and gatherings could impact your community and how to best provide for the safety of all involved. Each section lists several questions to consider, based on event safety research and emergency preparedness. Which questions are most relevant will vary depending on the resources in your town and the size and type of event planned.

A wealth of information on safety planning for large events can also be found in the Event Safety Guide and other resources put out by the Event Safety Alliance, a national body dedicated to safety in event planning: <https://www.eventsafetyalliance.org/>

Basics

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Event date |  |
| Event time |  |
| Venue |  |
| Expected number of participants |  |
| Event organizers |  |
| Point of contact |  |
| Contact information |  |
| Event description |  |
| Who is – or will be – on the planning team? |  |
| Is an Assembly Permit required (check <https://vsp.vermont.gov/permit/assembly> for guidelines)? If so, who is responsible for requesting it? |  |
| Does the town require an additional special event permit? If so, who is responsible for requesting it? |  |

Participant Demographics

Event participants can range widely, and the participants present may impact their health needs, ability to evacuate, and other factors that will impact emergency plans. An all-ages, child-friendly event will have different needs than an event aimed at retired and elderly residents, which will differ from an event aimed at young adults. The type, setup and marketing of events can also impact how prepared participants are for weather and other contingencies, how prevalent substance use is likely to be, and how likely participants are to be caring for their basic needs like food, water, and rest.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Who are the expected event participants? |  |
| What age ranges may be present? |  |
| How quickly or slowly might these participants be able to evacuate? |  |
| How are organizers planning for the needs of individuals with disabilities? |  |
| What health needs might be expected as a result of these demographics and what is being done to meet those needs? |  |

Communications

Redundant communications are helpful with large events, especially with threats of inclement weather that might impact phones or power, or large crowds that might overwhelm cell phone service. Thinking through redundant communication methods in advance can help prepare municipalities and event organizers in the event of an incident.

Consider using VT-Alert to communicate with subscribers in the area about potential safety concerns and traffic events: www.vtalert.gov. Non-profits, cities/towns and state government agencies can email dps.vtalert@vermont.gov to sign up to send alerts to their geographic area through VT-Alert. Signing up and promoting VT-Alert subscription to your community can help keep residents updated about any traffic impacts.

VT-Alert messages will go to VT-Alert subscribers. In extreme situations threatening life safety, the Vermont Emergency Management Watch Officer can send out Wireless Emergency Alerts and Emergency Alert System messages to all individuals in the geographic area. Contact the Watch Officer at 1-800-347-0488.

It is always a good idea to contact your local emergency service dispatch center(s) to let them know you are holding an event. This gives them information ahead of time in case they need to send responders to an incident, and gives them greater situational awareness for your region. This can be done through your first responders, who should be involved in your event planning team. They can use the **non-emergency** line for local dispatch.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Who needs to be notified about this event? Who is doing those notifications? |  |
| How will event organizers communicate during the event? |  |
| Is there cell phone service at the event site? |  |
| Is there Wi-Fi access at the event site? |  |
| Has local emergency response dispatch been notified of the event? |  |
| Is internet access available to participants? |  |
| Is attendance likely to be large enough to overload cell networks? |  |
| What is the backup communication plan? |  |
| What are the event organizer contacts for emergency management? Who are the backup contacts if the first cannot be reached during an incident? |  |
| How will emergency management and event organizers communicate with local residents about the event? |  |
| Is anyone on the team a VT-Alert notifier? |  |
| How will VT-Alert be used to communicate with VT-Alert subscribers in the area? |  |

Basic Services

Event participants and staff will need access to basic services, the extent of which will depend on the length of the event. If the event itself does not provide these services, contingency plans for access to them may need to be made in order to prevent larger health and logistical problems from arising.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Is there drinking water access?  |  |
| Will food be served? If not, are there places nearby for participants to obtain food? |  |
| Will crowds or needs be big enough that businesses should be alerted? |  |
| Which businesses might need notification? |  |
| How will sufficient restrooms be made available? |  |
| Will participants need lodging? Is there sufficient lodging available for the number of participants expected? Where will participants stay if there isn’t enough lodging and will it create challenges? |  |
| In what ways might neighboring communities be impacted? Which contacts should be notified and/or included in the planning team? |  |

Contingency Plans

We know from a long history of event safety mishaps that having an event stop plan is essential in case of an emergency. If the event needs to be interrupted for a safety concern, it is important to know how that will be communicated among organizers, performers/competitors (if applicable) and participants. It is also vital to decide who is empowered to make that decision, and what triggers would cause the event to be stopped.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What are the event cancellation criteria (weather, violence, other concerns)? |  |
| What individual(s) have the authority to cancel, postpone or alter the event for safety reasons? |  |
| What is the event stop plan if an event needs to be stopped or paused for emergency communications? |  |
| How does emergency management communicate with the individuals who can create an event stop? |  |
| Who will communicate contingency plans to participants during an event stop? |  |

Weather

Weather is one of the larger safety concerns for large events. Heat, cold, lightning, rain, and other factors can dramatically impact the safety of event participants. Municipalities have access to an incredible resource in the National Weather Service, who can provide detailed spot forecasts for events. These spot reports detail the predicted weather for your area over a specified period of time, including wind direction, temperature and precipitation. If contacted in advance, National Weather Service can also provide [Decision Support Services](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.weather.gov%2Fbtv%2Fdssrequest&data=05%7C02%7CEmily.Harris%40vermont.gov%7C60ada831a8dc45fd5dcf08dc240fac9b%7C20b4933bbaad433c9c0270edcc7559c6%7C0%7C0%7C638424896985329693%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=6uSukuBUIVZiknLZB9Rr0RTpxEsuwX%2BTgA9RB2yGnrs%3D&reserved=0) for events, including weather briefings, constant weather watches, and contacting you if hazardous weather threatens.

National Weather Service forecasts carry the advantages of being more detailed than weather apps on phones or the internet, having less delay than these apps, and including professional interpretations of the information received. Working with the National Weather Service might make carrying on with events during inclement weather more possible, as they can more accurately predict if weather events will impact your event site.

Weather does not need to be drastic in order to be dangerous. For example, rainy weather in the mid-40s Fahrenheit consistently produces hypothermia because people do not experience it as overly cold, and do not dress to protect themselves from becoming wet and then chilled. Participants in an exciting event may be more likely to overlook their physical needs in order to continue participating in the event, causing weather-related health problems.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| How exposed will participants be to weather? |  |
| What are the biggest weather threats at this time of year? |  |
| How are we collaborating with the National Weather Service? |  |
| In the event of warm weather, how will adequate water access be ensured? |  |
| How will participants access shade in warm weather or bright sun? |  |
| How will participants access heat in cold weather? |  |
| What weather events would trigger a postponement, cancellation or move of the event? |  |
| Who will make the call to postpone or cancel the event due to weather? |  |
| Is there an alternate location or weather plan that can be utilized if the original venue is unusable due to weather? |  |

Health Needs

Healthcare needs can vary widely depending on the type of event, size, setting, demographics in attendance, and activities planned. In rural areas, large events can quickly overwhelm available healthcare resources. Planning and collaboration in advance can help mitigate this impact.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What medical needs are likely? |  |
| Is the weather likely to cause health needs? |  |
| Who provides medical first response? |  |
| Are medical personnel staged on site? |  |
| Is emergency gear (medical kit, AED, specialized rescue) on site? |  |
| What are the closest medical facilities? |  |
| Has the closest emergency facility been notified of the event? |  |
| Are there barriers to emergency services accessing the event? To participants reaching the closest medical facility? |  |
| Is specialized rescue (water, wilderness/backcountry, ice, high angle) likely needed? |  |
| Who in the region provides this rescue, and have they been included in the planning process? |  |
| If an emergency unrelated to the event occurs during the event, how will sufficient response be provided? |  |

Evacuation Plan

Various emergencies – fire, weather event, threat or actual violence, etc – could require an emergency evacuation of an event. If an event needs to evacuate, having a plan in place can speed and streamline the process, potentially saving lives. Each event venue will have different evacuation needs, and venue staff and event organizers should be familiar with evacuation processes. Volunteers or other staff may need to be trained in evacuation procedures to support participants during an evacuation. Even a few people moving with purpose towards exits can help to direct crowds during chaotic moments.

During an evacuation, it is essential to leave a clear path into the area for emergency response. If possible, designate a road, path and/or entrance to be kept clear, and utilized by first responders entering the scene.

As noted below in the section on fire danger, your local fire department should be consulted on fire codes, evacuation procedures and building occupancy limits.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What is the evacuation plan for the event? |  |
| What is the meetup spot after an evacuation? |  |
| Do presenters/performers/staff meet in a different location from participants? |  |
| What event staff/volunteer support is needed to support an evacuation? |  |
| What factors trigger an evacuation? Who makes the decision to evacuate for other reasons if needed? |  |
| How are staff/volunteers trained in evacuation procedures? |  |
| Do evacuation routes leave clear paths and roads for first responder access? |  |
| If emergency shelter is needed during the event, will town shelter plans accommodate event participants? Are other shelter resources needed? |  |

Fire Risks

Large events during high fire danger conditions – especially outdoor events involving camping, fireworks, cookouts, or other fire use – can increase the risk of fires. Consider the fire danger conditions during the event, the likelihood of fire risk during the planned activities, the regulation of these activities, and local burn bans. Also consider what collaboration is needed with your fire department and potential mutual aid from nearby departments. The fire danger map can be found here: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/forest/wildland-fire/monitoring-fire-danger>

Large indoor events also come with their own fire safety needs, which your town’s venues hopefully already follow. Be sure exits are fully visible, open and accessible, capacity limits are adhered to, and that exits are pointed out to audiences at the start of the event. Consult with your fire department regarding fire codes, building occupancy limits, and exit requirements, to be sure these requirements are met. Note the evacuation procedures in the previous section in the event of a fire alarm or evacuation due to fire risk.

|  |
| --- |
| **Outdoor Events** |
| Will the event include outdoor activities with fire risk? |  |
| What are the current and predicted fire conditions? |  |
| Are lightning storms likely during the event? |  |
| Will any fire regulations be put in place to reduce risk (burn bans, campfire limits, etc) |  |
| Has the fire department been included in planning? Is mutual aid or staging required? |  |
| **Indoor Events** |
| Will the event include indoor activities with fire risk? |  |
| Are event staff trained in an evacuation plan in the previous section? |  |
| Are sufficient exits for the number of participants present, clearly marked, open and clear? |  |
| Are building capacities known and adhered to? |  |
| Is fire department notification or staging necessary? |  |

Substance Use

Use of substances by event participants can impact their medical needs, interactions with event organizers, and interactions with locals. Not all substances have the same types of impacts or medical concerns, so an understanding of substances likely to be in use can help anticipate needs. Approaching from a framework of harm reduction – attempting to reduce the risk of harm to all participants, no matter what their relationship to substances – will support the widest variety of needs, and help ensure residents and participants feel safe accessing medical care.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Will alcohol be served/available? |  |
| Is a liquor license needed? (visit <https://liquorcontrol.vermont.gov/which-license/other> for guidelines) |  |
| Will participants likely be driving after drinking? |  |
| What steps can be taken to minimize intoxicated driving? |  |
| Who is responsible for these steps? |  |
| Will other substances likely be present? What types are expected? |  |
| What medical or other needs might result? |  |
| Has medical support been made aware? |  |
| Is Naloxone available on site? Are event personnel trained in its use? |  |

Traffic and Road Conditions

Large events may cause traffic issues that interrupt daily business in town. Preparation for these can stop an inconvenience from turning into a hazard that interrupts emergency service access to roads. Travel in Vermont can vary drastically from month to month and sometimes day to day. Participants may or may not be prepared for hazardous road conditions. Thinking ahead about the impact of large events on roads will help mitigate danger to event participants and damage to roads.

VT-Alert can be used to alert subscribers of unusual traffic issues, road conditions and large upcoming events (see communications section above). Signing up and promoting VT-Alert subscription to your community can help keep residents updated about any traffic impacts.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What roads and traffic patterns may be impacted? |  |
| Will this cause problems with typical commutes? |  |
| How will emergency services be able to access the event site if needed? |  |
| Is traffic direction needed? Who will provide this? |  |
| Where will participants park? Will this parking plan be impacted by weather conditions? |  |
| What are the forecasted road conditions? |  |
| How will adverse road conditions be communicated to participants? |  |
| If necessary, what is the plan for clearing roads? |  |
| Is damage to roads anticipated? |  |
| What is the plan for repair of damage? |  |
| At what point will the event be canceled if road conditions are dangerous? |  |

Thank you for taking the time to think through these questions. Have a great event!