Special Event Safety Overview

Most church safety teams focus on weekly services and regularly scheduled activities—Bible studies, youth groups, support groups, and more. But every church also hosts **special events**, and these bring unique safety challenges that require additional planning and awareness.

What Is a Special Event?

A special event is **any activity outside the church's normal weekly routine**. These events often involve:

- Larger crowds
- Temporary changes to facilities or grounds
- Additional logistics and advance planning

Examples include festivals, fun runs, concerts, conferences, outreach events, food drives, and building-wide activities.

General Safety Risks

These risks can occur at almost any event:

- Medical emergencies
- Fire alarms
- Disruptive individuals
- Severe weather
- Slips, trips, and falls

Event-Specific Safety Risks

Safety needs vary based on the nature of the event. Consider:

- **Physical activities:** play areas, inflatables, fun runs, sports, lifting/moving items
- **Environmental factors:**
    - Indoors: gyms, sanctuaries, hallways, classrooms
    - Outdoors: parking lots, yards, off-site locations
    - Weather: heat, cold, storms, wind, rain

Attendance & Age Groups

The number of attendees determines how many safety team members are needed. Age groups also affect risk:

- **Seniors:** higher likelihood of medical emergencies
- **Children:** require supervision to prevent accidental hazards

Planning Safety Team Coverage

Effective planning starts with knowing:

- What the event is
- When it occurs
- Expected attendance

Churches should have a **clear procedure** to notify the safety team of upcoming events. Without it, planning becomes difficult—and events may occur without proper coverage.

Because safety teams often have limited personnel, not every event can be staffed. A simple policy helps determine when coverage is required. For example:

Safety Team coverage is recommended when:

- Attendance is **100+ people**
- A group with **special needs** is present
- The event may be **controversial**
- Additional risk factors are identified

Staffing guidelines:

- Large indoor events (300+ people): **2–3 team members**
- Multi-area or outdoor events (300+ people): **3–5 team members**
- Minimum staffing for any event: **2 team members**

Risk Mitigation Considerations

Think through both indoor and outdoor scenarios:

- Rain or severe weather
- Heat or cold exposure

- Trip/fall hazards
- Traffic flow and parking control
- Overcrowding
- Controversial topics or speakers
- Adequate exits and evacuation routes
- Need for “protect-in-place” procedures
- Special Needs accommodations

Non-routine equipment may include:

- First aid stations
- Controlled entry/exit points
- Cooling or warming areas
- Water stations

Special Event Safety Plan

Every major event should have a **written safety plan**. This plan:

- Outlines event-specific risks
- Assigns responsibilities
- Provides guidance for staff and volunteers
- Ensures consistent communication and response

A safety plan helps everyone from pastors to volunteers, understand how to support a safe and successful event.

