



Ideas and Suggestions for Public Safety at Concert Events

Submitted to:

TEXAS TASK FORCE ON CONCERT SAFETY

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INTRODUCTION

Whereas live concerts, festivals and public gatherings are a vital and integral part of the culture and tradition in all communities throughout the state of Texas, it is without a doubt that proper planning, communication, and detailed measures should be taken to ensure that Public Safety is of utmost importance at all times.

This report is submitted as a brief outline of ideas whereby members of the Texas Task Force on Concert Safety may review, expand upon, and add their own thoughts and suggestions in a combined effort to establish a uniform set of safety guidelines that may be applied to any concert and public event, large or small.

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- Concert Promoters: Contracting with Event Organizers and Staff

The Concert Promoter, whether being an individual entrepreneur or corporate entity, partakes in the main responsibility for the planning, organizing and overseeing of all facets that affect the operation and safety of a planned event from start to finish. This entails hiring and contracting trained and competent staff and event security teams to work with organizers who are tasked with the administration of the event's full scale operation. Prior to the event, schematic drawings of the event grounds and floor plans should be submitted to the local municipality, law enforcement, fire department and first responders that show positions of stage, main audience area, entry and exit points of perimeter fencing and/or walls, as well as location of vendor booths, first-aid stations, public facilities, entertainment rides (if included), etc.

(Notes & Comments)

- Acquiring Event Insurance, Permits, Contracts with Performing Artists

The Concert Promoter ensures that proof of full liability insurance coverage and all necessary permits required to conduct the event have been acquired at least one month prior to the event date. Contracts with Performing Artists should clearly stipulate rules and responsibilities expected of the performers, stressing safety while on stage and refraining from inciting fans to create pandemonium.

(Notes & Comments)

- Advertising, Marketing & Public Service Announcements Addressing Concert Safety

Paid advertising placed with radio, television and print media could incorporate messages that help bring attention for attendees to think about their safety and the safety of others while attending and enjoying the upcoming event. This same message may be included on the Promoter's website and social media. The Promoter may partner with a local media outlet and retail music store to produce a Public Service Announcement (PSA) stressing a mindset for safety at crowd gatherings. One Task Force Member in the initial phone conference of 11/17/2021 suggested having well-known recording artists in the PSA.

(Notes & Comments)

- COMMUNICATION: Three Levels of Communication

Level 1: Communication with City/County Officials:

The Promoter's initial contact with the local municipality, law enforcement and fire department starts the process to acquire event permits and to present detailed plans of the event including expected crowd attendance. Street closures and re-routing of vehicle traffic are determined in this phase by City officials and would afford the opportunity to have input for requiring any last minute changes or revisions that may be deemed necessary. Person(s) having ultimate authority to stop or cancel the event may be established at this time with priority given to local authorities when eminent danger is present.

(Notes & Comments)

Level 2: Communication with Event Staff, Bands and Attendees:

Promoters/Event Organizers normally conduct a pre-event meeting to give thorough instructions to the Event Staff and Event Security. Discussion of potential problem areas can be pointed out and corrected prior to the event. Band Members should also be advised as to maintaining professional conduct on stage while playing their best to entertain the crowd and refraining from any message that could incite the crowd to become hostile and unruly. Perhaps a pre-show announcement by a local DJ or event organizer could be made from the stage to address the crowd and ask for their assistance in making the event be an enjoyable and safe one for all. Also, instruct the audience to notify the nearest Event Security Officer of any situation that requires immediate attention. "See Something, Say Something."

(Notes & Comments)

Level 3: Communication During Event in Progress

Constant Radio Communication is a must while monitoring the mood of the crowd and to advise of any problem. A "Central Command Station" should be implemented and operate on the same frequency with Law Enforcement, Fire Dept. Personnel and First Responders who are stationed on-site. "Spotters" could possibly be assigned to help monitor the crowd. Many times the Promoter or Event Organizer is nowhere to be found when a crisis situation arises. Back-up decision makers should always be in place.

(Notes & Comments)

- Pre-Event Planning: Survey of Outdoor Grounds and/or Indoor Floor Plans

Promoters and Event Organizers should conduct an on-site visit to become completely familiar with the grounds and floor plan of the venue. Schematic drawings of the event layout should be drawn to scale and presented to local officials for evaluation. Areas should be given grid designations on the drawing to identify sections of the venue. This would assist Security and First Responders to know immediately where to locate any disturbance or emergency situation that is occurring. Fire Dept., Police and Health Inspectors must be allowed access for final inspection prior to opening gates to the public.

(Notes & Comments)

- Inspection of and Securing Perimeter Fences and Walls, as needed

As part of the on-site visit, the perimeter fences and/or walls should be inspected for any possible wear that show areas of structural weakness. Requiring the owner of the venue to repair any deficiencies would help prevent the event from being breached by non-paying individuals or crowds who may want to sneak in with the intent to cause disruptions. One measure of safety would be to post event security at certain points outside of the venue in order to spot potential problems and in turn call for assistance.

(Notes & Comments)

- Stage Construction, Sound System and Light Rigging, Crowd Barricades, Fireworks Displays

The Promoter may at times contract with more than one company and independent teams of workers who come together to assist in setting up the stage, lighting and sound equipment. Contract workers should be of reputable experience in proper stage construction that will bear the load of all equipment and any hyper-activity by band members during performances. Likewise, all workers involved in the wiring and connecting of sound systems and rigging of scaffolds should be experienced in proper set-up procedures that comply with all safety standards. Human error in construction as well as weather-related factors have caused stages and light grids to collapse, some resulting in the tragic loss of lives as noted in the following reports:

<https://theatretechgeek.wordpress.com/2011/12/20/another-stage-collapses/>

<https://ieba.wordpress.com/2010/06/26/stage-rigging/>

In the area of wiring and connecting sound systems to high voltage receptacles, it is of prime importance for hired electricians to be properly licensed in lieu of employing novice and unlicensed helpers. Fire extinguishers should be mounted on or near the stage and the event staff properly trained in their use.

- Crowd Barricades at Front of Stage

A preventative measure to discourage and deter crowds from rushing onto the stage should be the use of metal barricade gates placed at a pre-determined distance between the platform and jubilant fans. Event Security, and Law Enforcement Personnel, should be posted at strategic positions at the front and sides of the barricade to enable clear observation of crowd movement.

- Plans for Pyrotechnic Displays should be reviewed and authorized by the Fire Marshall and only set up and ignited by qualified personnel. The Fire Marshall may prohibit the planned use of pyrotechnics if circumstances are deemed unsafe for any reason. For example, if any conditions exist such as prevailing winds or being in close proximity of ceilings or nearby materials that could easily ignite. One reported incident of tragedy caused by a fireworks display is known as **The Station Nightclub Fire 2003**, Rhode Island, where 100 lives were lost: <https://www.nist.gov/el/station-nightclub-fire-2003>

(Notes & Comments)

- Adequate Staffing of Event Security: Private Company, Local Police and/or Sheriff Personnel

The expected number of attendees should determine how to properly staff the event with Security Personnel for effective crowd control and monitoring all areas of crowd activity. One Texas municipality requires the presence of one Law Enforcement Officer for every 250 attendees at concert events in addition to the already hired Event Staff. This may vary by City and perhaps a uniform code should be established for designating the ratio of Police Officers to the size of the expected crowd.

(Notes & Comments)

- On-Site Medical Team: First Responders including Ambulance and Fire Dept. Unit(s)

Another safety measure required of concerts is the presence of local Fire Units and the hiring of trained and certified First Responders to be on site throughout the event. First-Responder Teams and Ambulance drivers should be from within the local jurisdiction as they would be most familiar with the community traffic and proximity from the event site to the nearest hospitals.

(Notes & Comments)

- "Spotters" for Monitoring Crowd Environment and Identifying Potential Problems.

Promoters and Event Organizers should consider posting Event Staff throughout the crowd or at elevated positions specifically for acting as "Spotters" who can help monitor crowd mood and activity. Prompt detection of problems such as incitements of fights or uprisings of violence can be reported immediately. Spotters should have a designated area to watch and be properly equipped with radio communication to alert Central Command and others who are monitoring the event's radio frequency.

(Notes & Comments)

- Food & Beverage Booths and Food Trucks

Health and Food Safety should be important when hiring vendors who will be operating food and beverage booths and serving from food trucks. Food Vendors should be licensed by the County Health Department and held to the highest standards, same as restaurants, in regard to cleanliness and maintaining proper temperatures for serving and storing of food being sold at the event. Employees working at food booths and food trucks should be properly trained in food handling, cleanliness, and be in good health at all times. These safety measures will help prevent the danger of sickening customers due to food poisoning. County Health Inspectors should make on-site visits for ensuring that Food Vendors are properly licensed, food is being served and stored at proper temperatures, equipment is properly installed, that the kitchen and serving counter are clean and meet health code standards. Surrounding areas should be free from unsanitary conditions such as overflowing trash receptacles.

The following article covers food safety tips that can be applied at any concert event:

<https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2019/05/food-safety-tips-for-fairs-festivals-could-save-you-on-memorial-day/>

(Notes & Comments)

- Merchandise Vendors

While CDs, T-shirts, caps, flags, etc., are the main items sold at concerts, vendors should be prohibited from selling products that would be deemed a safety hazard to the consumer or that could possibly be used to endanger the safety of others. All Vendors should be agreeable to being inspected by Officials.

Additionally, with the recent concerns of the Corona Virus-19 pandemic, it may be advisable for Merchandise Vendors to consider safety measures when packaging and displaying items for sale.

(Notes & Comments)

- Perimeter Signage and Lighting at Entry and Exit Gates and Doors

In order to facilitate the ease for movement of crowds at ingress and egress, directional signage should be clearly visible from a distance of at least fifty feet and prominently displayed at the outside and inside perimeter fences. In the event of any mass confusion and crowd panic during the concert, the highly visible signage would be a source of guiding people to the closest exit points. Large signs placed above first-aid stations/booths within the event grounds would also help attendees easily find help in the case of heat exhaustion, dehydration, cuts, or other circumstances requiring medical attention of any kind.

(Notes & Comments)

- Security at Entry Gates, Admission Booths and Private Entry Doors/Gates

Security Personnel stationed at the Main Entry Gate will be in a position to observe arrivals for any sign of trouble and to help facilitate entry to the event in an orderly manner. Signs of a waiting crowd growing impatient can be spotted and should be calmed down as quickly as possible.

Event Staff working at an Admission Booth should have a Security Guard posted nearby. Security is normally posted at Private Entry Doors and Gates that are not intended for the general public but only for the entry and exit of Event Staff, Musicians, Technicians, Law Enforcement, Media and other authorized personnel. Proper Identification, Event and Stage Passes, are a must to enter restricted areas, however, should not be required for Uniformed Officers, Fire Department and First-Responder Personnel.

(Notes & Comments)

- Providing Adequate Facilities (Portable Toilets) for Estimated Attendance and Maintenance

(Notes & Comments)

- Crowd Control Procedures at Entry Point(s) to Event

The unpredictability of crowd behavior should be considered for determining how to respond when it appears that a potential out-of-control situation is building up. This entails close observation of crowd activity at all times. Various scenarios must also be taken into account for being prepared on how to immediately control an unruly crowd. In the case of the November 5, 2021 Concert at Houston's Astroworld Festival, the sudden overwhelming crowd surge rushing toward the stage resulted in the trampling over hundreds of attendees, causing the tragic deaths of ten young people and leaving several hundred sustaining various injuries. The question is - how could this have been prevented from happening? High emotions of excited and impatient fans can also be the cause of creating a chaotic disturbance that could soon get out of control where pushing and shoving begin. One example is what occurred at a promotional give-away of music CDs by a local media outlet in South Texas. When a crowd of fans gathered to receive their free CD, several people from behind the waiting crowd began pushing toward the front of the group and started rushing the media employee who was handing out the CDs from a box he was holding. The employee was soon overcome by the rush of fans who were forcefully grabbing his arm and pushing him so they could get to the product. The employee became frightened, dropped the box on the ground, and quickly stepped out of the way. Several fights had to be broken up between fans who were trying to take CDs away from one another. This seemingly innocent promotion quickly turned into a chaotic and dangerous situation and was not attempted again.

- Crowd Surveillance During Event

As noted earlier, Event Staff and Security should anticipate problem situations and watch carefully for disturbances that could have the potential of creating a hostile environment. Spotters among the crowd or monitoring from an elevated area can quickly determine when an emergency alert needs to be communicated by radio and readily identify the grid area where the problem is occurring.

(Notes & Comments)

- Crowd Control Exiting the Venue at End of Event

There may be as much crowd impatience to quickly exit the venue as there was when first arriving and wanting to rush to get the best position nearest the stage. Event Staff should monitor the crowd flow and mood as they leave. Security should remain posted at exits until all attendees have vacated the event.

(Notes & Comments)

- Weather and Other Factors Beyond Control

(a) Sudden and Severe Weather Outbreak at Outdoor Events

Texas weather can be unpredictable at times whereby catastrophic winds, tornadoes and torrential lightning storms will threaten property and lives of those who are exposed to the elements. The Promoter and Event Organizers of outdoor concerts should be aware of weather patterns approaching the event date(s) and determine whether to keep the scheduled date or cancel the event when it is very likely that severe weather is being expected on the day(s) of the planned concert. In the case of an event in progress being affected by an unexpected dangerous weather pattern, cancellation of the event should occur. Crowds should be advised of the cancellation and instructed to leave in an orderly manner. This situation, however, could possibly trigger stampedes of people rushing toward the exit gates which could in turn result in varying injuries. Event Personnel should be prepared to take necessary steps that ensure a safe exit of attendees under any condition.

(b) Outbreak of Fire(s) and/or Stage / Light Rigging Collapse

Electrical Fires and Structural Failures at events are often linked to human error by inexperienced workers and by rushing to complete the work. However, severe weather and lightning storms have also been a factor in causing fires and structural collapse. In either situation, the lives of people in attendance is endangered and has been the cause of deaths and injuries throughout the years.

(c) No-Show of Main Headline Band or Performer, Resulting in Crowd Anger

Fans attend concerts not only to enjoy the live music and festivities but also to see their favorite band and headline performers in person. A factor beyond the control of the Promoter is when the headline performers fail to show up for whatever reason. Disappointed fans can then become hostile toward the promoter and begin to create disturbances that can get out of control. A plan of action should be in place to anticipate this type of situation and be prepared to calm an angry crowd.

(d) Crowd Disturbances Escalating Into Fights That Involve Numerous People

This is an area where "Spotters" can detect an incident of provocation between individuals who have become at odds with one another in any area of the concert grounds. Law Enforcement should be notified immediately in order to respond and bring the disturbance under control.

(e) Potential Risk of Terror Attacks by Lone Wolf or Domestic or Foreign Operatives

It is very unfortunate that public gatherings in America and throughout the world are at risk of being threatened and attacked by individuals and groups who claim ideological reasons for the attack. Ironically, it is the playing of music and festive entertainment that many attackers are against. Thus, Parades and Concerts have become "Soft Targets" as documented in the following reports:

(ABC News Report) Concerts, other soft targets remain vulnerable to attack, experts say
<https://abcnews.go.com/US/concerts-soft-targets-remain-vulnerable-attack-experts/story?id=47582876>

(Article) Timeline: Attacks on Live Music, May 23, 2017
<https://www.ig-mag.net/2017/05/timeline-attacks-live-music-manchester-bombing/>

- Post-Event Analysis: Lessons Learned, Recommendations for Future Events

During the November 17, 2021 conference call of the Texas Task Force on Concert Safety, one Task Force Member mentioned that there should be a post-event evaluation in order to make any adjustments needed to improve the operation of the next concert. This would be a good practice which could also include documentation of the evaluation and recommendations to be kept on file and used for future reference.

(Notes & Comments)
