

CHARTING A COURSE THROUGH THE STORM

One of the first steps I take when creating an emergency-management plan is completing what I call my Matrix of Event Risk form, which helps me review the various potential calamities that my client could face at a particular show.

STEP Identify all potential threats.

1 I begin by brainstorming all possible threats applicable to a given show and organize them into four categories: Environmental, Health and Safety, Technological, and Social. The most common emergencies are listed here, but every show, location, and industry carries its own risks, so take the time to consider all of the disaster situations that may arise.

STEP Determine the likelihood of each threat.

2 Ascertain the probability that each scenario could occur by researching the various threats. For example, use the National Weather Service (www.weather.gov) to review the show location’s historic meteorological patterns and the weather forecast during the show dates, and check with the general service contractor or show management to identify possible labor issues (e.g., the expiration of union contracts).

STEP Check your insurance coverage.

3 Review your insurance policy or contact your carrier to determine if you are covered for each potential threat, and if so, to what extent.

STEP Identify all external decision-makers.

4 Determine which outside entities and agencies will: 1) establish that an immediate threat exists — e.g., the National Weather Service declaring a tornado warning — and 2) assume a leadership role in a crisis, such as local law enforcement responding to a protest near the venue.

STEP Select your internal leadership team.

5 Who on your team would be best suited to assume a leadership and/or decision-making role in each scenario? This will most likely include the exhibit manager and other senior staffers on site, but also consider off-site personnel. For example, members of your company’s human-resources department should be involved in managing staff medical emergencies.

STEP Determine how the external decision-makers will communicate in the event of an emergency.

6 There are many ways the external decision-makers you’ve identified may pass along information during a crisis, e.g., via alerts on the show’s website, public-address announcements at the venue, email, and social media. Contact these key players to ascertain what mode of communication they’ll use so your team leaders will know how vital alerts and updates will be conveyed.

STEP Establish your internal communication strategy.

7 Finally, decide how your internal leadership team will share pressing news with on-site staffers and off-site stakeholders. Options range from apps such as WhatsApp — ideal when communicating an immediate threat — to standard text messages, emails, or old-fashioned “phone trees.”

Matrix of Event Risk

		LIKELIHOOD OF RISK				INSURABLE (Y/N) Amount	EXTERNAL DECISION-MAKER(S)	INTERNAL CRISIS TEAM MEMBER(S)	COMMUNICATION FROM EXTERNAL DECISION-MAKER(S)	PREFERRED INTERNAL COMMUNICATION METHOD(S)
		High	Significant	Moderate	Low					
ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS	Winter Storm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes; \$10,000	National Weather Service, show management	Exhibit manager, corporate travel booker	Show management will email weather-related updates	Exhibit manager will update travel booker via phone call
	Thunderstorm/Lightning/Flood/Mudslide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Earthquake/Tsunami/Building Collapse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Heat Wave/Drought	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Venue Fire/Wildfire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
HEALTH AND SAFETY THREATS	Hurricane/Tornado	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Terrorist or Extremist Attack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	Department of Homeland Security, venue management	Exhibit manager	Venue management will share alerts via PA system	Exhibit manager will send WhatsApp message
	Active-Shooter Situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Transportation: Airline/Vehicle Attack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Act of War	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Pestilence/Pandemic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Hotel Safety/Security Issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
TECHNOLOGICAL THREATS	Staff Medical Emergency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Utility Outage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	Venue and show management	Exhibit manager, IT manager	Venue and/or show management will email updates	Exhibit and/or IT manager will text updates
	Communication Outage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Computer Network Outage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Security Breach of Event Data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
SOCIAL THREATS	Security Breach of Staff Data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Civil Disturbance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	Venue management and local law enforcement	Exhibit manager	Venue management will email updates	Exhibit manager will email updates
	Destination Travel Ban	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Union-Labor Disruption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					