

Garlic Festival Shooting Gilroy, California – Local Special Events Planning

On Sunday, July 28, 2019, Santino William Legan, age 19, shot and killed 3 people and injured another 12 at the Gilroy Garlic Festival. Legan is reported to have cut through a perimeter fence and then engaged multiple persons with an SKS assault rifle before being engaged by police officers present on the grounds. Initially it was reported that he was killed by the officers. However, an autopsy revealed the fatal wound was self-inflicted.

By all accounts, there was a significant law enforcement presence throughout the festival to include screening at the entrance points, an onsite command post and officers on patrol. The officers, armed only with handguns, engaged Legan within a minute of his attack, saving countless lives. Their response is a reminder of the importance of Special Events Planning.

Special Events Planning

Event planners need to prepare for a broad range of contingencies. The incident at the Gilroy Garlic Festival stands as an example of preparedness. However, in addition to security, all events must prepare for basic needs such as toilet/sanitation facilities, parking, theft, lost items, lost children, medical issues and difficult participants.

Assessing Risk and Developing a Plan

Acts of violence are increasingly more of a concern. Recent events illustrate the potential for an armed assailant. Other issues are more common and can be anticipated such as unruly spectators at a sporting event, medical emergencies at a county fair, etc. Most fall somewhere in between and a threat and risk assessment should be conducted to determine the following:

- The potential harm an incident could cause (to people, property, business and/or reputation).
- The probability of it happening.
- The cost of preventing the threat and/or minimizing its impact.

Once the threats have been fully assessed, a security plan can be developed that specifies the measures to be taken and the resources required.

Pre-Event Planning

- Designate a security group consisting of representatives from facility/grounds management, risk management, safety, support personnel (e.g., ushers, ticket sales personnel, etc.), and event promoters. A security coordinator should be appointed with overall responsibility for the plan.
- Complete a security assessment to identify potential threats and establish contingency plans to address them.
- Develop and implement a security and crowd control program, including procedures for handling incidents, such as bomb threats, armed assailant, criminal activity, conducting weapons searches, evacuating the facility. Any plan should be coordinated with local law enforcement and emergency agencies.
- Establish a central communication point for coordinating all safety and security activities during the event.
- Review social media to determine if there are any planned disturbances or protests.

- Adopt a system for the event so that all involved have a clear understanding of the response plan in the event of an incident.

Access Control

- For events within a building, keep all exterior entrances locked, in accordance with local safety code requirements, and require visitors to enter the facility through controlled entrance.
- Provide enough staffing at entrances and exits to facilitate the orderly entry and exiting of the crowd. ***Note: This is a challenge at outdoor events as demonstrated at the Gilroy Garlic Festival. While there were security check points at entrances, Legan was able to breach the perimeter through a fence.***
- Ensure emergency exits allow for the free flow of the crowd from the facility. Screen the crowd as they enter the facility to prevent visitors from bringing in items that can be used as weapons. Entry screening can range from visual inspection and bag searches, to metal detectors and hand-held wands.
- Provide secure parking facilities and enforce parking arrangements to facilitate movement of guests and access for emergency personnel and vehicles.
- For events at which a large volume of cars is expected, request the assistance of law enforcement in providing traffic control on local roads.

Manage Transportation and Parking

- Adequate parking is essential as is having enough personnel available to direct the incoming and outgoing vehicles.
- Managing traffic at the end of an event can be more challenging since most people are leaving at the same time, may be fatigued, etc.

Guest Entry and Vendor Screening

- Determine admittance protocols. Be sure to include on your invitations/forms what's required to enter the venue. Consider requiring identification for entry and to provide admittance validation, such as a stamp, bracelet or credential. Have a system in place for screening vendors. Facilitate access for caterers, entertainment, and other supporting elements during setup and the event. Communicate protocols well in advance of the event date.

Logistics

- Administrative logistics is devoted to acquiring, purchasing and/or renting all security-related items, maintaining control of inventory and managing all the costs involved.
- Operational logistics ensures that all members of the security team have what they need to do their jobs, to include transportation, parking, food and beverages, access to restrooms and any necessary security equipment.

Personnel

- Provide security personnel, and adjust staffing needs according to the size of the projected crowd. Ensure staff has the requisite experience and training; to have gone through a background and criminal history check; and to be screened for illegal drug use. Require

additional training and certifications for armed security personnel. If possible, hire police officers who will have the necessary training to perform these, as well as other functions, such as handling ejections and arrests.

- Have Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel on site.
- Hire temporary workers for handling concessions, custodial services, ticket taking, ushering, and other non-security tasks, from agencies that perform background checks.
- Require personnel to wear picture identification badges. Provide business visitors and service personnel with temporary identification cards.
- Assign security personnel to patrol the facility/grounds during the event and be able to report to the command center.
- Provide training on crowd dynamics, address social media, reinforce protecting people's rights and the objective to keep people safe.

Information and Staying Informed

- Information is critical to event security. The more participants know about the event; when it starts and ends, what items are prohibited, where to find parking, etc., the easier it is for security personnel to maintain order.
- Everyone from local business owners and residents to those in charge of public transportation need to be kept current on event plans.
- Security must ensure appropriate dissemination of information and monitor what information is sent out by promoters and attendees.
- Security needs to monitor the social media space.

After-Action Review (AAR)

- An AAR should be completed and shared with the security team. The AAR focuses on both the positive and negative aspects of the event.
- The main purpose of an AAR is to identify and document what worked, what did not work, and what could be improved. A useful AAR should help prevent the same kinds of mistakes and incidents from occurring at the next event. The AAR can also include any additional data, such as crowd control measures that were especially successful, that may be useful in planning similar future events.
- If an incident occurred during the event, summary should be prepared to document how personnel responded to the incident in case questions of legal liability arise later. These records should be maintained if they are needed at a future date.

Summary

The key to a successful special event is planning for every contingency and having the appropriate resources on hand to address them as they arise. Despite our best planning and availability of resources, natural disasters, fires, health problems and acts of violence do occur.

Ask yourself the simple questions... "***Do we have this covered and what are we going to do if this happens?***"

