



# Security and Emergency Management Aspects of Planned and Unplanned Special Event Service

**Abstract:** This standard provides security and emergency management guidance to transit agencies for planning and managing service during both planned and unplanned special events.

**Keywords:** emergency management, security, special events

**Summary:** Special events, both planned and unplanned, can affect transit agency operations in myriad ways. It is important for a transit agency to assess special event activities in advance to identify security and emergency management issues and contingencies. Special events can also provide a potential high-exposure and target-rich opportunity for individuals or groups intent on committing criminal and/or terrorist acts. Effective coordination and communication among event sponsors, emergency management agencies and transit agencies is critical to ensuring that events run smoothly and that contingencies are in place for potential major incidents.

**Scope and purpose:** This document covers the security and emergency management aspects of a transit agency's services during planned and unplanned special events. It is meant to provide a standard to transit agencies for evaluating the potential effect of special events to their systems. This standard does not capture requirements associated with National Special Security Events (NSSEs) or Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR) assessed events.

This document represents a common viewpoint of those parties concerned with its provisions, namely transit operating/planning agencies, manufacturers, consultants, engineers and general interest groups. APTA standards are mandatory to the extent incorporated by an applicable statute or regulation. In some cases, federal and/or state regulations govern portions of a transit system's operations. In cases where this is a conflict or contradiction between an applicable law or regulation and this document, consult with a legal adviser to determine which document takes precedence.

© 2021 The American Public Transportation Association (APTA). No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, in an electronic retrieval system or otherwise, without prior written permission of APTA.

# Table of Contents

Participants..... iii  
Introduction..... iii

**1. Special events overview..... 1**

**2. Preparing for planned special events..... 1**

2.1 Planning process..... 1  
2.2 Pre-event coordination and communication..... 2  
2.3 Incident Command System..... 2  
2.4 Pre-event site survey..... 4  
2.5 Event plan ..... 4

**3. Preparing for unplanned special events..... 4**

3.1 Planning process..... 4  
3.2 Pre-event coordination and communication..... 5  
3.3 Incident Command System..... 5

**4. Special event operations..... 6**

**5. Post-event activities..... 6**

5.1 Records ..... 6  
5.2 Analysis ..... 7

**References..... 8**

**Definitions..... 8**

**Abbreviations and acronyms..... 8**

**Document history ..... 8**

## List of Figures and Tables

**Figure 1** Example of an ICS Form Adapted to Meet a Transit Agency’s Needs ..... 3



## Participants

The American Public Transportation Association greatly appreciates the contributions of the **APTA Security Emergency Management Working Group**, which provided the primary effort in the drafting of this document.

At the time this standard was completed, the working group included the following members:

**Neil Crosier**, Chair  
**Jill Shaw**, Vice Chair

Christy Bailly, *Metro Transit*  
Brad Blackburn, *Sound Transit*  
Marla Blagg, *TriMet*  
Aldon Bordenave, *Metro*  
Samuel Caron, *Metro Transit*  
Alexa, Dupigny-Samuels, *WMATA*  
Thomas Eng, *Metro*  
Rufus Francis, *Santa Cruz Metro*

Darryl Jamail, *CapMetro*  
BJ Johnson, *New Orleans RTA*  
Robert Melan, *TSA*  
Mark Munroe, *MBTA*  
Joseph Tebo, *Federal Transit Administration*  
Anthony Tisdale, *Federal Transit Administration*  
Alexander Ubiadas, *TriMet*

### Project team

Polly Hanson, *American Public Transportation Association*  
Eric Halzel, *Eagle Hill Consulting*

## Introduction

*This introduction is not part of APTA-SS-SEM-S-003-08, Rev. 3, "Security and Emergency Management Aspects of Planned and Unplanned Special Event Service."*

APTA recommends the use of this document by:

- individuals or organizations that operate rail transit systems;
- individuals or organizations that contract with others for the operation of rail transit systems; and
- individuals or organizations that influence how rail transit systems are operated (including but not limited to consultants, designers and contractors).

# **Security and Emergency Management Aspects of Planned and Unplanned Special Event Service**

## **1. Special events overview**

Jurisdictions around the country regularly experience both planned and unplanned special events that involve large congregations of people and impact transit services. Large planned and unplanned special events may involve multiple events in multiple jurisdictions.

Planned events typically provide agencies advance notice, require approval and involve multi-agency planning committees. Planned special events may include occasions such as concerts, festivals, races, rallies, marches and protests. Federal, state and local officials may submit special events for a federal Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR). Nationally significant special events may be designated as National Special Security Events (NSSEs).<sup>1</sup>

Unplanned events occur with little to no advance notice, limiting agencies' ability to conduct preparedness planning. Taking the form of sudden large assemblies of people or covertly planned gatherings, unplanned events may be lawful or unlawful. Unplanned special events may include civil unrest, protests and "pop-up" events.

When planning for planned and unplanned special events that have any significant transit system involvement or impact, it is important that transit agencies be considered a primary stakeholder.

## **2. Preparing for planned special events**

### **2.1 Planning process**

Having a planning process for special events benefits transit agencies by creating methodologies for coordinating with other event stakeholders. It also allows transit agencies to develop and document best practices and lessons learned for different types of events. Transit agencies should be aware of how special events require deviations from normal service patterns, as well as modified transit security measures.

The following are keys to successful management of planned special events:

- Achieve early, ongoing input, partnership and participation of involved agencies.
- Estimate crowd size, travel impacts and weather patterns for special events.
- Develop an integrated transportation management plan that can accommodate a range of traffic/transit demands and other contingencies.
- Implement the traffic/transit management plan.

---

<sup>1</sup> A nationally significant event may be designated an NSSE by the U.S. president or the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. The U.S. Secret Service leads extensive efforts to coordinate, plan, exercise and implement security for NSSEs. This standard does not address requirements for NSSEs.

**Security and Emergency Management Aspects of Planned and Unplanned Special Event Service**

- Continue to monitor traffic throughout the day and use regional mobility contingency plans.
- Use lessons learned from prior special events.

**2.2 Pre-event coordination and communication**

Event stakeholders should coordinate with one another to advance joint planning and determine the effects the event may have on relevant jurisdictions and the transit system. Transit agencies should regularly engage with law enforcement partners to share information and intelligence and understand requirements and expectations.

Transit-relevant questions to address during planning may include the following:

- Will the event require changes to bus routes?
- Will the event require additional buses?
- Will the event require temporary bus stop locations?
- Will personal vehicle traffic affect bus routes?
- Will the event require additional rail service?
- Should some buses or trains be held in reserve for contingencies (e.g., pre-staged in pocket tracks, at staging points or deployed)?
- Will the event require the potential need for bus bridges or paratransit resources?
- Will event participants be arriving and leaving all at once, or will it be a continuous flow in and out?
- Will crowd-control measures be required at transit system boarding locations and stations?
- Are elevated security measures required for the transit system?
- Will screening of vehicles, transit employees and/or passengers be required either at the venue, at the agency’s facilities or at the transit agency?
- Are there security-restricted zones affecting the movement of transit vehicles or passengers?
- Are increased security measures required (e.g., vehicle screening, standoff distances or increased patrols)?
- What event risk factors may be present (e.g., overcrowding, violence, potentially increased criminal activity, demonstrations or fan celebration)?
- Are passenger problems anticipated (e.g., alcohol involvement or disorderly passengers)?
- At what level is the Incident Command System (ICS) being deployed, and what is the transit agency’s role and level of participation?
- How do event contingency plans interact with the transit system?
- What communication assets are available to the transit authority, coordinators and authorities having jurisdiction, and what is the compatibility and/or interface among these assets?

**2.3 Incident Command System**

Based on the size, complexity and nature of the event, transit agencies need to have the appropriate level of ICS-trained personnel involved, to either participate in or coordinate with the overall event ICS. There should always be a communication link to the event incident command post or supporting Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The following are some additional factors to consider:

- Potential scaling up of personnel and resources for the event and any related transit agency involvement should be considered in advance.
- Specific key personnel should be identified in advance and be aware of their duties in the event of a scaling up in response to an incident at the special event.
- A comprehensive list of key event contact information for during the event should be developed, including positions, names, locations, telephone numbers, email addresses, etc.

Security and Emergency Management Aspects of Planned and Unplanned Special Event Service

- Consideration should be given to radio interoperability issues, if necessary, to include providing radios to key communication liaisons of outside agencies.
- Consideration should be given to hybrid EOC models based on event circumstances.

Transit agencies should use ICS forms to document and support ICS and other incident management activities. The use of ICS forms promotes document and incident management consistency in accordance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), supports accountability, and assists with reimbursements. The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Emergency Management Institute provides fillable ICS forms at <https://training.fema.gov/icsresource/icsforms.aspx>, and transit agencies can adapt these forms to meet agency-specific requirements. An example of an ICS form is shown in **Figure 1**.

**FIGURE 1**

Example of an ICS Form Adapted to Meet a Transit Agency’s Needs

**WEATHER ASSIGNMENT LIST (ICS 203 – BUS OPERATIONS)**

1. Incident Name: Winter Weather Event		2. Operational Period:		Date From:	Date To:
				Time From:	Time To:
3. TCC Manager/Incident Coordinator(s)					
	Name	Hours			
	TCC Mgr On-Duty				
	TCC Incident Coordinators				
	Street Ops Mgr On-Duty				
	Street Ops On-Scene Coor.				
4. TCC Bus Operations			6. Street Operations AM Staffing		
Name	Hours	Name	Hours	Responsibility	
6. TCC Police Dispatch					
Name	Hours	Responsibility			
9. Prepared by: Name: _____ Position/Title: _____ Signature: _____					
ICS 203		IAP Page —	Date/Time: _____		

## 2.4 Pre-event site survey

Pre-planning activities should include a survey of the event site area and associated transit locations likely to be affected. Where useful, maps and event logistics should be used and distributed to transit agency employees involved in the event. Some issues to consider include the following:

- the physical relationship of the event site to passenger drop-off and boarding locations and stations
- any need to have law enforcement involved in restricting traffic or pedestrian flow to accommodate transit system vehicles and passengers
- whether crowd surges by passengers exiting the event are anticipated, where passengers should be queued and who will be directing them
- whether transit vehicles will be staged during the event, and whether those locations require security
- whether there are any specific locations where transit signage directing passengers should be placed
- what direction and to what locations people are to be routed if event contingency plans include measures for mass evacuation, gross decontamination, etc.
- geographic/topographic issues such as egress choke points, proximity to fall hazards, water exposures, etc.

## 2.5 Event plan

The agency should prepare an event action plan that articulates the involvement of the transit agency and provides an overall explanation of the event. In particular, consider the following:

- Function-specific duties should be outlined for agency departments involved in the event.
- Both event stakeholders and agency personnel should be made aware of the plan.
- Security sensitive plan information should be restricted to a need-to-know basis and controlled according to agency policies/procedures (including 49 CFR Parts 15 and 520).
- Contingency aspects of the plan should be outlined, such as use of the transit system to evacuate people or to deploy outside first responders from other locations to an event incident, or the impact of extreme weather conditions on the event and the transit system.
- Determine the need to bring on additional staff or to advertise announcements for patrons to prepurchase fares to assist in the collection of fares to reduce the congestion after the event.
- Any related transit emergency management plans should be referenced, such as the transit agency response to a major transit incident (derailment, explosion, chemical release, etc.).
- If necessary, the plan should outline any specific transit familiarization training that other agency personnel will be attending.

## 3. Preparing for unplanned special events

### 3.1 Planning process

Contingency plans help prevent an unplanned special event from posing a significant negative impact on transit operations. They provide organizations the opportunity to plan for unforeseen circumstances, thereby minimizing operational loss and maintaining a positive reputation with customers and employees alike.

Transit agencies should consider the following factors when developing contingency plans for unplanned special events:

- **Resources:** Select, locate and prioritize those resources most critical to the agency's mission, including individual staff members, teams, services, information and equipment.
- **Types:** Identify the types of unplanned special events that the transit agency may encounter based on mission, proximity/geographic location, current events and other factors.

**Security and Emergency Management Aspects of Planned and Unplanned Special Event Service**

- **Locations:** Pinpoint stops, stations, critical infrastructure sites and other transit locations most likely to be affected by an unplanned special event.
- **Methods:** Brainstorm ways in which unplanned special events may disrupt transit operations, including increased traffic, difficulty accessing stations and service delays, among others.
- **Impacts:** Determine how each type and method of unplanned special event disrupts essential services and interferes with business continuity, if applicable.
- **Response options:** Prepare response activities for singular events as well as multiday/multilocation events requiring additional resources and prioritization.

At a minimum, transit agencies should analyze the above factors to recommend appropriate mitigations, actions and decision-making processes.

**3.2 Pre-event coordination and communication**

Transit agencies should build relationships with partner organizations to better communicate and facilitate coordination during unplanned events and unforeseen challenges that disrupt the normal flow of customers. By establishing these connections in advance, transit agencies can share intelligence, increase the speed of response and minimize the impacts of unplanned events.

Transit agencies could consider establishing relationships with the following organizations and stakeholder groups, among others. These partners can be part of the response process or be simply kept apprised of the situation as it unfolds:

- local, state and federal law enforcement
- local, state and federal government
- local transit providers
- fusion centers and other intelligence-collecting bodies
- regulatory authorities
- trade associations
- unions

Transit agencies should also consider how best to communicate and coordinate with their people. It is critical that transit agencies are capable of rapidly relaying real-time information about unforeseen special events with their customers and employees.

Communications questions to address during contingency planning may include the following:

- What information will be shared about ongoing unplanned special events with customers? With employees?
- What are the mechanisms by which information will be shared?
- What technology systems can the agency leverage to manage real-time mass notifications?
- Does the agency have prepared communications templates or automated messaging systems?
- How does the agency intend to communicate efforts to minimize/eliminate service disruptions or safety concerns?
- If applicable, what instructions for customers and employees will the messaging provide?

**3.3 Incident Command System**

The decision to initiate Incident Command in the wake of an unplanned special event should be made on a case-by-case basis. Small, short-lived events may not require significant management structures or involvement from other agencies; however, events of this size may progress.



**Security and Emergency Management Aspects of Planned and Unplanned Special Event Service**

Transit agencies should identify trigger points for unplanned special events that denote escalation from an independently managed response to an ICS-managed response. Should a trigger point be reached (e.g., an increase in the event's magnitude or duration), transit agencies need to be prepared to ramp up resources and participate in EOC activities. As such, transit agencies should ensure an appropriate level of ICS-trained staff are on call to lead, participate in or coordinate with Incident Command.

## **4. Special event operations**

Transit agency field operations managers or supervisors involved in a special event, regardless of advance notice, shall consider the following:

- Maintain communications with the transit agency's command post, key internal staff and transit agency personnel in the field. The transit agency command post should identify a liaison to maintain contact with the event incident command post.
- Continuously assess conditions affecting transit system functions (traffic flow, passenger volume, etc.).
- Notify the transit agency command post regarding transit system disruptions that may affect event participants.
- Notify the transit agency command post regarding any security incidents occurring on transit system property or vehicles.
- If spectators are likely to leave the event all at once, then determine the time of any anticipated crowd surge toward the transit system and ensure that the necessary resources and personnel are in place.
- Have communications and contingency plans in place in case of an unscheduled evacuation of the site.
- Be able to supply appropriate fleet resources as soon as possible in the event of an emergency.

## **5. Post-event activities**

### **5.1 Records**

Post-special event records should contain sufficient information to enhance planning for future events that are recurring, similar in type or at a repeatedly used venue. Post-special event records should include the following:

- name of the event and the sponsoring group
- nature of the event
- key contact information for involved groups and agencies (minimally name and title, landline phone number, mobile number and email address)
- history of the event or others involving this location or organization, including problems and conditions encountered
- time frame of the event (days of the week, dates and hours)
- whether other area events (related or not) are occurring during the same time frame and whether the transit plan is separate or integrated between events
- geographic area of the event
- size and demographics of the crowd expected to attend the event and the number of people expected to use the transit system
- size and location of the event facility
- availability of alcohol
- types of transit system modalities involved (rail, bus, etc.)
- expected use of, or disruption to, the transit system
- adjustments made to rail or bus routes and schedules

**Security and Emergency Management Aspects of Planned and Unplanned Special Event Service**

- effect on transit system, including secondary locations, such as a transit hub that is remote from the event but likely to be inundated with passengers going to and from the event
- dedicated transit agency personnel required for the event
- general security concerns about the event and specific transit-related security issues
- outside security personnel deployed in support of the transit function, such as police patrols or crowd control at transit points
- transit-related communication to the public (posted signage, public address messages, etc.)

## **5.2 Analysis**

Analyzing event plans after a special event is important for planning purposes. The focus of the analysis should be focused on successes and challenges. Specifically:

- Assess plan success and shortfalls with transit system personnel and resources assigned to the event in an agency after-action review.
- Information should be solicited from multiple levels, not just management and supervision.
- Participate in any post-event after-action reviews conducted by event planners.
- Keep all recorded documentation readily accessible in a Corrective Action Plan.

## References

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Emergency Management Institute, IS-15.A, “Special Events Contingency Planning for Public Safety Agencies,” a five-hour independent study web-based training course. <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS15a.asp>

Goodwill, Jay, and Ann Joslin, “Special Event Transportation Service Planning and Operations Strategies for Transit,” National Center for Transit Research (NCTR) Center for Urban Transportation Research Report# BD459-09 / NCTR 576-09, University of Florida, March 2006.  
[http://www.dot.state.fl.us/research-center/Completed\\_Proj/Summary\\_PTO/FDOT\\_BD549\\_09\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.dot.state.fl.us/research-center/Completed_Proj/Summary_PTO/FDOT_BD549_09_rpt.pdf)

Latoski, Steven, et al., “Managing Travel for Planned Special Events,” U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, Report #FHWA-OP-04-010, Washington D.C., September 2003.  
[http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/program\\_areas/sp-events-mgmt/handbook/index.htm](http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/program_areas/sp-events-mgmt/handbook/index.htm)

## Definitions

**planned special event:** A public activity with a scheduled time and location that may impact normal transportation system operations as a result of increased travel demand and/or reduced capacity attributed to event staging. Planned special events include sporting events, concerts, festivals and conventions occurring at permanent multiuse venues (arenas, stadiums, racetracks, fairgrounds, amphitheaters, convention centers, etc.). They also include less-frequent public events such as parades, political rallies, fireworks displays, bicycle races, sporting games, motorcycle rallies, seasonal festivals and milestone celebrations at temporary venues. The term “planned special event” is used to describe these activities because of their known locations, scheduled times of occurrence and associated operating characteristics.

## Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>CFR</b>	Code of Federal Regulations
<b>EOC</b>	Emergency Operations Center
<b>ICS</b>	Incident Command System
<b>NATSA</b>	North American Transportation Services Association
<b>NCTR</b>	National Center for Transit Research
<b>NSSE</b>	National Special Security Event
<b>SEAR</b>	Special Event Assessment Rating

## Document history

Document Version	Working Group Vote	Public Comment/ Technical Oversight	Rail CEO Approval	Policy & Planning Approval	Publish Date
First published	—	—	—	—	March 13, 2008
First revision	—	—	—	—	April 1, 2014
Second revision	July 19, 2019	Sept. 13, 2019	Dec. 3, 2019	Jan. 3, 2020	Feb. 21, 2020
Third revision	June 7, 2021	July 9, 2021	Aug. 3, 2021	Oct. 4, 2021	Oct. 18, 2021