

Preparing for the unexpected

In addition to carrying out a risk assessment and developing procedures to prevent the likelihood of any accidents or serious incidents occurring, you will need to decide how you will respond if something does go wrong. Each individual who will play a part in dealing with an unexpected situation must understand their responsibilities and be given clear instructions at the planning stage. It is therefore important that there is a procedure and/or a contingency plan in written form outlining the management of such occurrences and the demarcation of duties in response to such events. Two categories of unexpected occurrences should be addressed, those within the event management control and those of a more serious nature, which will require the response of the emergency services. Your planning for the unexpected should take into account the following scenarios:

Minor incident/issue

The incident may affect persons in attendance at the event, cause a delay in a specific aspect of the event or disrupt the smooth running of the event in some way. The responsibility for activating a pre-planned recovery mechanism to effectively bring an incident to resolution must be clearly defined in your event procedures and contingency plans. Undertaking a what if exercise at the planning stage can assist in identifying the procedures you need to put in place to recover from such occurrences and allow the event to continue.

Examples of such incidents include difficulties with suppliers, the malfunction of equipment, the resolution of crowd management issues etc.

It is important to appreciate that a minor incident could have the potential to develop into a major incident if not properly planned for and managed.

Major incident

An incident such as a major fire, a serious accident involving a number of casualties, crowd disturbances which cannot be controlled by event staff, a bomb scare, structural collapse or even the effects of bad weather can necessitate control of the venue/event to be relinquished to the emergency services. The response to a major incident will normally require a multi-disciplinary approach in which the event management staff, the Gardaí/PSNI, the Health Authority, and the Local Authority may all play a part. The instructions of the emergency services will be conveyed to event staff via the Event Controller, who will formally transfer control of the venue to the Senior Garda Officer/PSNI Officer present or Senior Fire Officer (as appropriate), who thereafter will manage the incident.



Alerting the statutory services

It is important that the initial alert to the statutory emergency services is as exact and precise as possible, this will allow the responding agencies to dispatch the required resources promptly. The relevant information required can be summed up by the use of the acronym E.T.H.A.N.E.

E	T	H	A	N	E
Exact location of Incident	Type of incident	Hazard on site	Access/ Egress Routes	Numbers involved	Emergency service required

Emergency action plans and procedures for dealing with major incidents will form part of the event management plan which is agreed in consultation with the statutory agencies, this process ensures that such plans are compatible with the operational needs of the emergency response services.