

# Civil War Event Emergency Management Safety Considerations & Protocol

Planning for a Civil War-related event should begin at least one year in advance. In the first round of considerations to holding an event, a conversation should occur with your local emergency management agencies... police, fire, medical and DPW. Without their support and preparedness, a reenactment could have a disastrous outcome due to a natural disaster or human-related hazards. Poor planning could result in not only personal injury to those in attendance but would negatively impact the hobby as well. Any plan should include a complete accounting of who is on your property and at what time.

Benjamin Franklin once said, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

Regardless of the scale of your event, planning a safe event needs to be your priority. Here's how you can do that...

- A review of event safety basics
- Awareness of more sophisticated measures

## A Review of the Basics

The following considerations for safety and security should be reviewed by event organizers. For most events, early considerations are given to camp and battlefield locations, spectator and reenactor parking, restroom facilities, potable water and seasoned firewood. Secondary considerations are most often made to camp security and access. A comprehensive security plan with input by the local emergency management agencies (EMA), allows you to focus on the small stuff once the event is underway.

- 1) Have a emergency management plan in place for each event
- 2) The event should be staffed by qualified and informed security personnel
- 3) Reduce crowd density and determine spectator restrictions for lower risk
- 4) Focus on signs and handouts for event safety and security
- 5) Ensure event setup is in consideration to fluctuations to the weather
- 6) Improve coordination with the emergency management experts
- 7) Proper implementation of event safety and security planning (training, notifications)
- 8) Don't forget about pre-event and post-event security reviews... phone calls, letters, online and social media comments

## **(1) Have an emergency management plan in place for each event**

Remember that an emergency management plan has three main parts and serves the purpose of making your event as safe as possible for everyone involved and those living/working nearby.

- Hazard Identification: Recognize any hazards associated with your event. To identify those risks, consider the expertise of the different people/agencies involved and their roles in the setup, running and participating in the event. As well as human-related hazards, you should also recognize natural and environmental hazards.
- Risk Assessment: Use a risk assessment tool (see our Risk Assessment addendum) to estimate and identify the potential impact of a hazard to find the level of risk.
- Risk Control: With the help of the event team, develop reasonable solutions, starting with the high-level risks. Those may include the elimination of a hazard, substitutions, engineering, administrative and use of appropriate safety /security equipment, and changes to the protocol followed and advised by the reenacting community.

## **(2) The event should be staffed by qualified and informed security personnel**

All event staff should be considered as security personnel. All event staff should have the skills necessary to make a rational decision based on their training, knowledge, experience and attitude. Every staff member should be aware of all operating and emergency regulations including staff visibility, crowd access and control, evacuation procedures and emergency response strategies.

If you're hosting a larger event, in addition to a security team, you may also need local police and an emergency medical crew onsite. Having first-responders on-scene at specific hours of the event is invaluable.

## **(3) Reduce crowd density and determine spectator restrictions for lower risk**

When you're planning your event, you should think in terms of how many people and vehicles you can comfortably fit in the venue. But, in terms of security, opting for expanded event parameters, beyond what you actually need can be a good idea. That's because security issues tend to occur in densely populated and concentrated areas. Not only that, when it comes to the heavy-hitting issues like terrorism, it's been found that even the fear of terrorist activity "can lead to crowd disasters". Spreading out the audience and having additional event security to cover the larger area can reduce some of that risk.

#### **(4) Focus on signs and handouts for event safety and security**

Planning a safe event requires signs and handouts that inform not only the spectators, but the reenactors and first-responders as well. Signage and an informational handout offer the following:

- Defines the space's parameters and boundary
- Provides an overall appearance of organization
- Has areas and facilities that are well-marked so they are safely identified and accessible
- Has emergency plans (handouts) for all to follow

Recommendations: Walk the grounds with representatives of the local emergency management team (police, fire, medical and DPW). This aids in a faster, more direct response by security, police, fire, and medical teams in the event of an incident.

#### **(5) Ensure event setup is in consideration to fluctuations to the weather**

Sudden severe weather can disrupt even the best-laid plans. Some regions and time-of-year events are more at risk of unexpected weather. So, it's important to be mindful of this in both the planning stage and right through the duration of the event.

High winds and lightning are two of the most common weather conditions to cause safety hazards at events. Whether on the battlefield, in the camps, or in the food court or demonstration areas, temporary structures like tents, vendors and even horses are usually in the firing line for extreme weather. If not adequately secured and spaced, their size and weight become a scary hazard for all in the area. When this goes wrong, the implications are huge – financially, but more importantly, with regards to the safety of event team, reenactors and attendees.

It's vital you use the right vendors when planning a safe event so that you know the equipment, but also that their setup is appropriate. Excellent communication comes into play here too. Don't leave anything to chance. Ask questions (how fast can you dismantle your gear?), and check and check again. Decide who and how communication will take place if weather concerns do arise on the day (or night) of the event.

#### **6) Improve coordination with the emergency management experts**

As an event planner, you can better gauge safety measures needed by turning to the experts. There's nothing worse than realizing after an incident has occurred that you could have taken further steps to prevent or mitigate the impact. That's why we want to remind you of who you can seek expert advice from to ensure (as much as practicable) that you're planning a safe event.

- Law Enforcement. Even if you're hiring security staff specifically for your event, think about whether your event would benefit from a police presence or having them on standby. Determine how you will be communicating with law enforcement on the day (and night) of the event. Make sure all event staff, including the reenactor command staff, are aware of this as well so that you can all follow the same procedure. A more cohesive approach will mean faster response to any security concerns.
- Fire Services. In consideration of the use of black powder (rifles and artillery), campfires and fire-pits on the grounds, and possible propane cooking rigs by food vendors, it is best to inform if not invite the local Fire Marshal or Fire Department to review their local ordinances on the use of each. Fire Service inspections of campfires and fire-pits for water buckets is suggested. The Fire Marshal/Department should also be aware of current and forecasted weather conditions that may impact the use of the black powder or with weather conditions that may impact the welfare of those in attendance. It's critical to reach out to the experts to forecast what could potentially be coming and help you navigate through it.
- Medical Response. Although the reenacting community is very diligent in demanding safety protocol for all of their members, there is always a chance that something will go wrong. Whether on site for the reenactors or the public, the benefit is immediate.
- Department of Public Works. When an event is held on State, Town or private property, signage is paramount to public safety. Events held on private property empty out onto public roadways. Consideration to the location in the community and its neighbors – should always be addressed. Directing both people and vehicles at events, small or large – can certainly make an event safer.

Even when holding an event on private property, informing all of the local emergency management agencies can make a difference when a hazardous condition (weather-related or man-made) presents itself. Due diligence for the safety of your attendees is the highest priority when organizing an event. But communicating and planning with the experts is the way to know you've done everything you can. This is critical if something does happen, and you end up in court.

## **(7) Proper implementation of event safety and security planning (training, notifications)**

You may think you've been planning a safe event – but have you been thorough?

- Obtain all relevant documentation like insurance certificates from both the reenactors and your vendors. The event host (Town, State, organization, private property) must also be willing to add your event to or purchase a Certificate of Insurance.

- For safety purposes, you may want to identify codes-words or pre-planned hand signals to use as notification to other staff that something is wrong without causing anxiety with a suspicious person.

Ensure all staff, reenacting organizations, and vendors are prepared for emergency situations. Unfortunately, today, that doesn't just mean being prepared for medical emergencies and lost children. Preparations should include trainings and briefings for bomb threat, riot, and active shooter scenarios. Without that pre-event preparation, staff can be left wondering what to do – resulting in them doing something that contributes to the casualties or nothing at all.

### **(8) Don't forget about pre-event and post-event security reviews... phone calls, letters, online and social media comments**

Safety and security don't just come down to what's physically happening at your event. It's also about looking at online or social media comments and any threat made by phone or mail that relates to the event and event-goers. Inform the emergency management agencies as well as the reenactors and the public of all posted threats or concerns.

Remember, after every event, to review any safety or security issues that arose, or you noticed could have occurred. How did security and your event team respond? Is there something different your team can do next time? Learning and improving is critical for effectively planning a safe event every time. Be ready to share your experiences with other event coordinators during the season or at minimum, at the annual NECWE Event Coordinators meeting in December of each year. Your knowledge can make a difference.

M. G. Bassos  
NECWE Coordinator  
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# Civil War Event Emergency Management Assessment / Checklist

New England Civil War Events (NECWE) offers this general assessment /checklist as a reference guide, not as a document that addresses all matters of safety and security at a Civil War-related event.

## Pre-Event Security Plan:

- On all event advertising promote any safety or security check directives (ie. no coolers, no backpacks, all bags will be checked, no weapons, no pets, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_
- Check recent posts on event social media pages for threats, concerns \_\_\_\_\_
- Identification of event staff (shirts, vests, lanyards with ID cards) \_\_\_\_\_
- Communication system between event staff (radios, cell phone list) \_\_\_\_\_
- Determine two (2) training days for all event staff \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify points-of-contact with Police, Fire, Medical, and DPW \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify neighboring businesses/residences that may be impacted by the event \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify which vendors or sutlers use propane or other flammable system \_\_\_\_\_
- Reenactors / Vendors: Registration or participation forms should include valid insurance information. Blanket policies for each army may be presented. \_\_\_\_\_
- Determine a media point-of-contact person or team for the event \_\_\_\_\_

## General Safety: Security and/or Police

- Offers a visual sense of safety. Identifiable Security staff or Police Officer \_\_\_\_\_
- Determine best location for public awareness (at entry points, ticket booth) \_\_\_\_\_
- Determine movement of security staff during event (battle scenario, exit time) \_\_\_\_\_
- Communication: Event staff must be able to communicate with onsite Police or Medical personnel or off-site emergency system; 9-1-1. \_\_\_\_\_

## Spectators: Access and Crowd Control

- Determine spectator / crowd capacity \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify and mark all entry and exit points \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify emergency pedestrian exits - if available \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify emergency vehicle exits - if available \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify event pedestrian boundaries (cones, signs, line-tape, stanchions, etc) \_\_\_\_\_
- Assign staff to demonstration or battle/skirmish areas to maintain the integrity of the location (be ready to direct spectators from one place to another) \_\_\_\_\_
- Determine spectator check-in protocol (backpacks, handbags, coolers, camera \_\_\_\_\_

bags, etc. ...will there be a visual check policy, and if so, Police Officers should not do this, security personnel only) \_\_\_\_\_

- Identify beforehand what items cannot be brought into the venue ...any weapon (real or facsimile), alcohol or illegal substance, etc \_\_\_\_\_
- Ticket sales area – have security staff, cash only, w/communication ability \_\_\_\_\_

**Parking: Spectator**

- Secure spectator parking areas (by order of use) and handicap access areas \_\_\_\_\_
- Stage signage and/or staff to assist in parking vehicles in an orderly fashion \_\_\_\_\_
- Recommended Policy – NO TAILGATING \_\_\_\_\_
- Parking staff should remain in the lots at all times \_\_\_\_\_

**Reenactors: Access**

- Direct and identify registration and check-in area for reenactors \_\_\_\_\_
- Reenactor registration area should be away from spectator entry point \_\_\_\_\_
- Reenactor areas should be free from public access during set-up / take-down \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify specific areas for Cavalry and Artillery units (trailers, equipment) \_\_\_\_\_

**Parking: Reenactor**

- Secure reenactor parking areas (by order of use) and handicap access areas \_\_\_\_\_
- Stage signage and/or staff to assist in parking vehicles in an orderly fashion \_\_\_\_\_
- Parking staff should remain in the lots at all times \_\_\_\_\_
- Parking area checks during the nighttime hours \_\_\_\_\_

**Vendors:**

- Identify staging area for all vendors (food, displays or other presenters) \_\_\_\_\_
- Secure a parking area for them (close if possible as they are used for supplies) \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify electrical and potable water access points \_\_\_\_\_
- Can power be shut down on the site at one location? \_\_\_\_\_
- The Event Coordinator should know how many support staff are on site for each vendor (list of names suggested) \_\_\_\_\_
- The Event Coordinator should know if a sutler is camping overnight on or off of the site. (local hotel, in a car or trailer). \_\_\_\_\_
- The Event Coordinator should be aware of any sutler or their support staff who leaves the event early and will no longer be on site. \_\_\_\_\_
- Alternate regress (on foot and vehicular) from the property should be identified, if possible \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenters:**

- Any guest presenter should be vetted. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Identify any controversial statements, writings, posts, etc. by guest speaker \_\_\_\_\_
  - If controversial, security should be provided – or reconsidered. \_\_\_\_\_
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**General Camp Safety**

- Identify a media point-of-information person for each camp (military, civilian) \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify the Commanding Officer for each army \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify the Safety Officer for each army \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify the Provost Marshal for each army \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify the Cavalry Commander for each army \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify the Artillery Commander for each army \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify the Civilian Camp leader \_\_\_\_\_
- Are there water buckets placed at each fire-pit / campfire \_\_\_\_\_
- Each reenactor should carry personal identification that includes: name of unit, reenactor name, date of birth, home address, home or emergency contact name and phone number, recent medical history, current medications, allergies, and religious affiliation (optional). \_\_\_\_\_

**Military Camp**

- The command staff of each army should know who is participating each day \_\_\_\_\_
- The command staff should know if a unit or individual is camping overnight outside of the camp. (tree line, local hotel, in a car or trailer). \_\_\_\_\_
- The command staff should be aware of any individual or unit who leaves the event early and will no longer be on site. \_\_\_\_\_
- Alternate regress (on foot and vehicular) from the property should be identified for the reenactors, if possible \_\_\_\_\_

**Cavalry Camp**

- Cavalry command staff of each army should know who is participating each day \_\_\_\_\_
- Cavalry command staff should know if a unit or individual is camping overnight outside of the camp. (tree line, local hotel, in a car or trailer). \_\_\_\_\_
- Cavalry command staff should be aware of any individual or unit who leaves the event early and will no longer be on site. \_\_\_\_\_
- The number of cavalry horses should be reported to the Military Command \_\_\_\_\_
- Close access to the horse trailers should be made available , if possible \_\_\_\_\_



- Alternate regress (on foot and vehicular) from the property should be identified, if possible \_\_\_\_\_

### **Artillery Camp**

- Artillery command staff of each army should know who is participating each day \_\_\_\_\_
- The command staff should know if a unit or individual is camping overnight outside of the camp. (tree line, local hotel, in a car or trailer). \_\_\_\_\_
- The command staff should be aware of any individual or unit who leaves the event early and will no longer be on site. \_\_\_\_\_
- The number of artillery pieces should be reported to the Military Command \_\_\_\_\_
- Close access to the artillery trailers should be made available, if available \_\_\_\_\_
- Alternate regress (on foot or vehicular) from the property should be identified, if possible \_\_\_\_\_

### **Civilian Camp**

- Civilian leadership should know who is participating each day \_\_\_\_\_
- The leadership should know if a unit or individual is camping overnight outside of the camp. (tree line, local hotel, in a car or trailer). \_\_\_\_\_
- The leadership should be aware of any individual or unit who leaves the event early and will no longer be on site. \_\_\_\_\_
- Alternate regress (on foot or vehicular) from the property should be identified, if possible \_\_\_\_\_

### **Sutler Row**

- The Event Coordinator should know how many support staff are on site for each sutler (list of names suggested) \_\_\_\_\_
- The Event Coordinator should know if a sutler is camping overnight on or off of the site. (local hotel, in a car or trailer). \_\_\_\_\_
- The Event Coordinator should be aware of any sutler or their support staff who leaves the event early and will no longer be on site. \_\_\_\_\_
- Close access to the supply trailer should be made available , if possible \_\_\_\_\_
- Alternate regress (on foot and vehicular) from the property should be identified, if possible \_\_\_\_\_

**Determine a policy on the removal of spectators (uncooperative, protesters, etc.)**

- Develop a policy (handout or post) on how unruly spectators will be handled
  - If private property, have your policy in writing so that the Police can enforce your rules and regulations on your behalf
  - If public property (local or state), have a conversation with the local Police or law enforcement agency = DEP Officer, Park Police, State Police, Conservation Officer, Federal Agent, etc.) as to how such incidents will be handled (issued a verbal warning by Police, removed by Police, or arrested by Police)
  - No one should place their hands on or verbally banter with a protester. Remember, almost everyone has camera on their phone. Your words and actions can be used – in part – to hurt the event, the reenacting hobby, the property, the Police, and most of all... YOU!
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**How to Identify Suspicious Persons or Questionable Behavior: What to look for!**

- Not all suspicious persons or questionable behaviors are a threat.
- Nervousness, nervous glancing or other signs of being ill-at-ease. This may include sweating, "tunnel vision" (staring forward inappropriately), and repeated statements or muttering. This may also include repeated entrances and exits from the event site.
- Inappropriate, oversize, loose-fitting clothes (e.g., a heavy overcoat on a warm day).
- Keeping hands in pockets or cupping hands (as in holding a triggering device).
- Seeming nervous and looking over their shoulders. Abruptly changing behavior when seen.
- Leaving packages, bags or other items behind (putting down a camera bag or backpack and walking away or going into a tent w/o a reenactor)
- Sitting in one area for an extended period of time - possibly being on the phone with a partner
- Constantly favoring one side or one area of the body as if wearing something unusual or uncomfortable (e.g., a holster, fanny pack or cross-shoulder bag). Pay attention to a person constantly adjusting waistbands, ankles, or other clothing. Projected angles under clothing may also be indicative of a firearm, e.g., at the waist or the ankle.
- Carrying packages or other items they were not allowed to bring in.
- Individuals in a heated argument, yelling or cursing at each other.
- Security people should be told, where possible, to observe people as they exit their cars; by watching how they adjust clothing and how they approach the site, they can look for signs that a person might be carrying something questionable.
- While, again, no one factor is a certain indicator of a problem, once a problem is identified, security personnel have three options: do nothing, investigate and decide whether to take emergency steps, or immediately take emergency steps. This is a decision only you can make in light of the circumstances, your personal comfort level and safety considerations. Remember... see something, say something.

- If you choose to investigate, greet the person in a friendly fashion, asking "Can I be of assistance?" or "Welcome, is this your first time here?" "Have you ever been to a reenactment before?" Evasive or unusual answers may trigger your emergency procedures. Excuse yourself and initiate your procedures, perhaps by using a pre-determined code-word or signal with your colleagues. If you choose to admit the person to the event pending assistance (e.g., arrival of police) remember what vehicle they came in (registration plate, make, model, color), and take a mental photo of their appearance (gender, height, weight, skin tone, hair/eye color, facial hair, clothes, footwear, tattoo or markings).
  - If a Police Officer is on-site, inform him/her immediately (use communication system).
  - Make sure the dispatcher understands the emergency nature of the call and the need for a law enforcement response without sirens. Off-duty officers generally work armed and are aware of security procedures.
  - As you are identifiable as event staff, feel comfortable in asking if they need assistance or by offering them an event itinerary handout (allows you to get close)
  - If you remain suspicious, trust your instincts.
  - If the person leaves immediately, or runs from you, you should contact the police immediately.
  - If you see something, say something.
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## **BAHAVIOR SPECIFIC TO REENACTMENTS**

Reenactments are not much different than any other outdoor event. The difference is that there are currently social issues related to our history that are upsetting to some (Confederate Flag, monuments, uniforms, slavery, etc.) and reenactments are a way to target their cause. Whether by disruptive protesting, weapons, or incendiary devices, a reenactment is a one-stop cause-celeb for the irate individual.

All reenactors and event staff should work to keep our hobby safe. Here is a list of considerations to keep your eyes open for:

- Main Gate & Event Site
  - Large groups attending together
  - Clothing bearing questionable written sentiments or photographs (anti-American, various "Lives Matter")
  - Individuals coming through gate, then meeting up in large groups
  - Groups / individuals segregating themselves from the main crowd
  - Large or heavy-looking (sagging) backpacks
  - Heavy, bulky clothing in warmer weather
  - An upset spectator when asked to return an item to their car (written, posted)
  - Anyone who places any item on the ground and walks/runs away from it

- Parking Areas
    - Long periods of time sitting in the vehicle or standing by an open trunk
    - Any vehicle left running with no occupants
    - Anyone who places any item on the ground and walks/runs away from it
    - Spectators walking towards or into the reenactor parking area (not in a uniform during the day)
  - Camps
    - Anyone who stands around and limits eye contact or conversation
    - Anyone who is seen going into or coming out of a closed tent
    - Limit how close camps are located to a public roadway (day or night concerns)
    - Camp security during the battle scenarios
    - Consider overnight security
    - Anyone who places any item on the ground and walks/runs away from it
  - Sutler Row / Vendor Area
    - Anyone who sits /stands away from others for long periods of time
    - Anyone who places any item on the ground and walks/runs away from it
  - Port-o-lets
    - Anyone who places any item on the ground and walks/runs away from it
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## **COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE**

The Event Coordinator and the Commanders of each army and their representatives pledge to work hand-in-hand with local emergency management (police, fire, medical and DPW) agencies (EMA) to respond in a collaborative effort in the case of a natural disaster or human-related emergency.

The reenacting leadership is well aware of their responsibility to their membership and to the general public in portraying American history in an accurate manner. It is when current day issues arise that our reliance on the (EMA) comes to play. This is a hobby that only we know best, and that our input in how an emergency response plan is determined best serves to assist the local EMA should a response be warranted.

In case of an emergency, the following will have been addressed:

- The Captain of each unit shall call the roll for his unit to identify who may be not be present or accounted for \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify and assign a representative(s) from each camp to assist local EMA (not the Captain as he/she will have other duties) \_\_\_\_\_

- Such representative will conduct or oversee a search of the specific camp for items that may be out of place for a reenactment event \_\_\_\_\_
- If you do not agree with the law enforcement response, address it later. Comply. \_\_\_\_\_