

# [Crowd control at events](https://assignbuster.com/crowd-control-at-events/)

Is crowd control always needed at events?

Crowds are inevitable in today’s society as we move into a growing leisure culture. Large crowds are a normal part of any event involving public or private venues. Therefore, crowd management is essential to ensure that people are spread out evenly to avoid overcrowding. This in turn improves the customer experience and reduces time spent queuing (McDonnell et al 1998). People are sometimes confused as to why we use crowd management and crowd control as two separate categories. Abbott(2000 pg 105) points out that “ crowd management and crowd control are two distinct but interrelated concepts. The former includes the facilitation and movement of crowds, while the latter relates to the steps taken once the crowd has lost control”

Poor crowd management can lead to crushing, injury and possible death. Events such as the Hillsborough Disaster (1989) resulted in the death of 96 football fans and hundreds more being injured. Lord Chief Justice Taylor identified the failure of police crowd control as a major factor in the tragedy (BBC 2009). Recently, event organisers underestimated the amount of people attending the switching on of Birmingham’s Christmas lights resulting in a surge of fans through safety barriers.

The supervision of crowds requires good team work with good communication between police, stewards, management and the crowd for the best outcome. Effective team work depends upon senior managers providing a positive safety environment so that all staff are aware of the importance of crowd safety. Roles and responsibilities need to be clear and adequate training provided to allow staff to work to the best of their ability.

It has become increasing clear that the main factor in organising a festival or event is ensuring a secure and calm environment for large crowds. All event management must include planning, organising, staffing, directing and evaluating. Getz( 2007, 272 pg ) states that “ planning is a future orientated process in which organisations set goals and put in place actions to attain them”. The crowd management team needs to take into consideration all different elements of the event such as type of event, sporting/concert/parade/festival and the associated difficulties. Whether the venue, including toilet facilities and refreshments, can cope with the size of the crowd attending and ensures that the venue allows safe admission and discharge of the crowd. It must also be noted that whilst a book signing may not attract great crowds the unpredictability of that crowd must also be taken into consideration and the planning, organising, staffing, directing and evaluating is just as important as that of a large event.

Bowdin (2006) states to have an effective plan of how the event is going to be run, facility management must be aware of the characteristics of the audience that will attend. A football game will inevitably attract more males than females and alcohol may also be a contributing factor to be considered. Some football games will start before pubs open to avoid crowds drinking before kick- off and becoming disruptive and more police may be required. Alternatively, festivals are more likely to attract families and children and will involve a more transient crowd requiring more stewards to inform the public of where to be.

The sociology of the crowd is a major aspect of crowd control. This can provide reassurance that we are safe with other people and not alone, however to some this could be constraining, intimidating and claustrophobic. Getz (2006) identifies that sociology is concerned with “ interactions between people, or social life, including a focus on how relationships are patterned in the form of groups, organisations and societies” Gladwell (2002 pg 717) informs us that “ once we are part of a group we are all susceptible to peer pressure and social norms”. This means that crowds can be very easily influenced by people around them, and can cause a disturbance to fit in to their peer group. At a concert, some people will stand up from their seats causing others to follow or chanting at a football crowd can spread across the stadium.

Doukas(2006) states that having preventative tactics and assisting crowds is often much more effective the trying to control them, for example a crowd is more likely to respond in a positive way if they are treated with respect rather than if they are treated harshly. Therefore, workers need to create a calm and relaxed environment to allow the clients to behave in the same way. This can be done by having leadership within each event Bowdin (2006) states that a leader is someone who provides direction for the staff. This could be said that leaders form the foundation for risk management for attendees at the event. According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE, 1999, p. 7) risk can be defined as “ the likelihood that harm from a hazard is realised and the extent of it”. Management therefore need to identity the risks in the crowd before they grow, they also need to have a process of how they are going to deal with the circumstances if it becomes a situation to control. However whilst doing so, they need to make sure that they keep the crowd as relaxed as possible to allow less hazard to arise. A fire alarm at an event may require the immediate evacuation of the public but would need to be executed in a calm, controlled manner to ensure a speedy safe result.

In conclusion, crowd management and control can be a complex issue involving a multi-agency approach. Communication is a key aspect and should be maintained before, during and after the event. Planning, organising, staffing, directing and evaluating are key processes that need to be carried out efficiently in order to maximise the client experience. As we are aware that we cannot please everyone all of the time, it is important to minimise any contributing factors so that an event can be remembered by those attending for many years to come.