

SAFE & SECURE

Putting Safety and Security First at Your Event

Our friends at **Explore St. Louis** recently hosted a forum with expert voices from the hospitality industry speaking about their experiences, ideas, and concerns regarding safety and security. The following recaps that meeting and presents some of the collective wisdom gathered there.



While safety and security are vital components of every event plan, they often take a backseat to other items on meeting planners' long to-do lists. Budgetary concerns can also drive down security considerations, especially as costs increase for other necessities. This dichotomy is not new. What has changed is the frequency and unpredictability of potential threats like terrorism, severe weather, changes to weapons laws, and civil unrest. The world has changed. Event and meeting planners and their clients are challenged to change with it.

Explore St. Louis, both the destination marketing organization for St. Louis, Missouri and the operator of the America's Center and the Dome, is proactively discussing the meetings and convention industry's safety and security needs in partnership with its National Customer Advisory Board. The board consists

of meeting and event professionals from across the country and its members bring a broad range of experiences, knowledge, and perspectives.

To uncover best practices and offer practical advice to meeting industry professionals, Explore St. Louis conducted a half-day workshop focused on the theme that safety and security is not only the responsibility of venues or planners, but rather everyone's responsibility. Presenters noted that the success of every event hinges on strong communication and collaboration between the venue and the event planner to deliver attendee experiences that are as rewarding as they are safe and secure. During the latter part of the workshop, planners broke into smaller groups and set about devising guidelines for various components of event safety and security. **The following checklist resulted from those spirited conversations:**

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Safety and Security Checklist


Organizers cannot plan too early or too often for the safety and security needs of their events. Engaging the representatives of venues under consideration early in the process will clarify the breadth of security needed and how a venue manages security. Once a planner selects a venue, ongoing dialogue between the planner and venue representatives is critical to ensuring a positive experience for everyone.

Risks

Every venue is different; every group is different; every event is different. Be thorough!

- 1 Discuss security needs with venue representatives or provide a list of questions during the RFP stage. Venue input is critical in determining the final safety and security plan as there is no “one-size-fits-all” option. Request information from the venue regarding:
 - » The frequency of security meetings with nearby hotel staff and parking facility operators informing them of updates and changes in security measures;
 - » The type of frontline employee training conducted and whether trainers use realistic situations in real-time so venue employees know what to do in the event of an emergency;
 - » The relationship, if any, between the venue and local/state/federal authorities.
- 2 Coordinate with the venue if a formal threat assessment is necessary.
- 3 Determine appropriate insurance needs and be certain policies are in place prior to the event.
- 4 Evaluate the potential risks in and around the event. Consider demonstrations inside and outside the venue, potential weather-related problems, and controversial speakers, attendees, or entertainers.





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Pre-Event Planning

Incorporate safety and security considerations in all aspects of your event.

- 1 Calculate the security needs and associated costs based on the risk assessment. Include these costs in the overall budget.
- 2 Assess security protocols provided by the venue.
 - » Determine if extra security personnel are warranted and define the party responsible for hiring and managing the extra security.
 - » Review added security protocols to understand if they create added security risks.
- 3 Working with the venue, create an internal plan of action to account for a variety of potential threats including:
 - » Theft
 - » Personal/medical injury/emergency
 - » Terrorism/active shooter
 - » Civil disobedience
 - » Unexpected weather conditions
 - » Fire
 - » Unauthorized access to venue/event
- 4 Provide detailed information about attendees to venue staff, including demographics and any potential concerns.
- 5 Determine if credentialing is needed for attendees, vendors, staff, etc.
 - » If so, determine who will be responsible for providing credentials;
 - » Identify a process to determine the authenticity of event credentials; and
 - » Position attendee registration strategically to ensure only registered attendees gain access.

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Communications

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- 1 Inform all staff of event plans because information silos can undermine safety and security.
- 2 Provide thorough security information to all attendees before the event.
 - » Present relevant safety and security information to attendees on first day, including venue requirements and recommendations; and
 - » Be sure this information is available at all times.
- 3 Create a framework for external communications via PR and social media to guide communications in the event something unexpected happens.
 - » Predetermine the most appropriate messaging media; and
 - » Identify and empower team members to make decisions.
- 4 Determine if local/state/federal authorities are on board and aware of your event. The venue may do this, but check to be certain.

Special thanks to the members of the Explore St. Louis National Customer Advisory Board who contributed their time, energy, and advice concerning this important topic.

Explore St. Louis is the official destination marketing organization responsible for selling St. Louis City and St. Louis County as a convention and meeting site and leisure travel destination.

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