

# Fairgrounds Emergency Plans

March 2020



## Fairgrounds Emergency Plans

Emergency response plans for fairs, exhibitions, and fairgrounds can be in many different formats. They can be written and stored in multiple ways. They can address different types of scenarios and can vary enormously depending on the activities that take place at the fairgrounds.

The plan needs to align with the uses, needs, and geography specific to each fairground. It can be used repeatedly for vastly different events during the year and should be different than the plan for a fairground that sees little non-fair activity. A festival that has animals on site has different issues than one that does not. However, certain issues, especially weather-related issues, can impact fairs and festivals of any size. In all cases, planning ahead should result in a better outcome than reacting to an event, and the planning process can even help identify hazards that can be mitigated or prevented entirely.

This document is not meant as a model guide, but instead to help identify and to raise issues that should be considered when creating or updating an emergency plan for a fairground. There are professionals and volunteers in the private sector and in every level of government who have backgrounds and expertise in developing, writing, and updating emergency plans. In many cases, these individuals will help develop and update plans at no cost. It does take time, and these individuals need the expertise that only resides with people who know the fair and the fairgrounds. Collaborating with these individuals, and especially with your county's emergency management coordinator, the local emergency planning committee, and the local health department are good first steps in developing a plan that addresses both on-site and external issues.

What are some **key components** of an emergency plan for a fair, exhibition, or a fairground?

- ***Integrates with local plans***
- ***Collaborative – written with input from many disciplines***
- ***Known and Used***

### Integrates with local plans

Local emergency response plans are developed under the direction of the Michigan Emergency Management Act (Act) (1976 PA 390, MCL 30.401 et seq.) The Act requires the development and maintenance of the Michigan Emergency Management Plan (MEMP), which is a comprehensive, all hazards document that encompasses mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery for the state. The MEMP is maintained by the Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division, and is updated on a regular basis.

The Act also requires every county and some cities to have a designated emergency management coordinator. These individuals help with planning and preparedness at the local level, as well as response to emergencies of all natures. They have developed locally based plans that integrate with the MEMP and outline how responses to events should be organized.

An emergency response plan for a fair, exhibition, or fairground must fit into the structure of the local plan to be successful. For example, if the fair's emergency evacuation plan conflicts with the city or county's plan, then the public's safety may be at risk during an evacuation because of inconsistent or conflicting orders. Similarly, if the local jurisdiction's emergency plan calls for using the fairgrounds and its facilities in some circumstances, but the plan does not address how the response would move forward if the fairgrounds are occupied, then the local jurisdiction's plan may not be complete.

The fair and fairgrounds may already be mentioned in the local unit of government's emergency plans. As large public events, fairs are recognized as locations where emergency responses, including evacuation, may have to take place. Fairgrounds are also referenced in some local emergency plans as staging areas because in many cases, they have fences, large open areas, and multi-purpose buildings. These capabilities can make fairgrounds ideal operational bases – but only if the local emergency planners and the fair's leadership have been working together. Buildings may be full of winter storage or without heat and water during winter months, or on any given day may be occupied by any number of non-fair activities. By working together with local emergency planners, the community's and the fairground's emergency plans will be greatly strengthened.

### Collaborative – written with input from many disciplines

To be effective, an emergency plan cannot be written by one person and then put in a binder on a shelf. Developing a strong plan takes cooperation from a wide variety of sources, all of whom have different expertise and viewpoints. Though a collaborative working group may be more difficult to organize and may take

longer to develop a final product, together a variety of disciplines will build a stronger plan that addresses more issues more thoroughly.

Human health, animal health, law enforcement, public safety, environmental concerns, and many other disciplines may all be necessary, each adding a different and valuable voice. Vendors and exhibitors may have unique concerns that are quite different than those of emergency response or the public during an emergency. Also, since emergency issues are often related with injuries and economic losses, both the legal and insurance viewpoints should be considered. While it may seem daunting to assemble every possible expertise at once, each update of a plan is an opportunity to add and develop new partnerships and address new concerns. The ultimate goal is a plan that helps protect the public's health and safety.

### Known and Used

A successful plan is a plan that key people know. First, fairgrounds staff and volunteers should know that the plan exists, what its key components are, and where it is. Again, if only one person has developed the plan, knows what's in it and where it is, then the plan can't and won't be very useful when needed most. Ideally, a key group of staff and volunteers have helped to develop the plan, and in the process learned the key components. During the crisis is not the time to be looking for the plan or reading it for the first time.

The plan should also be used. It should be flexible enough to address what roles need to be filled and what duties need to be completed in events from small to large, and can be used in any situation. The plan should be used during training sessions for staff and volunteers, during special exercises developed to test the plan, and during real-life events. In each of those cases, comments and issues raised should be captured and worked in to improving the plan for the future.

However, keep in mind that some portions of an emergency response plan are sensitive and should not be distributed freely or widely. For example, items like specific security measures and 24-hour personal contact information should not be posted openly on the internet or shared indiscriminately. You may wish to consider having different versions—the more detailed version in a secured location, and a streamlined version that can be distributed. Also, since a detailed plan that encompasses many hazards might be a lengthy document, you may wish to have a simplified version that is quickly readable and understandable.

Also, keep in mind that the many varied activities that can take place on the fairgrounds during the course of the year bring special challenges. Fair staff and volunteers may know about the plan, but key participants from non-fair events

may need training on what to during emergencies. Use of gates and buildings may also differ significantly with non-fair events.

## Plan Components

The following pages contain a list (by no means complete) of areas and issues that a plan should consider.

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose Statement (What is the goal?)

1.2 Scope (What is included? What areas are not addressed in this plan?)

#### 2.0 INDIVIDUALS & AGENCIES RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Primary (Who are the main people and agencies responsible for the various activities at the Fair and on the fairgrounds during non-fair activities? Who do you expect will respond to certain events? Which agencies at the local, state, and possibly federal levels of government are responsible for certain areas? What non-governmental groups are responsible for certain activities? What about on the grounds during non-fair events and when the fairgrounds are empty?)

2.2 Support (Which people and agencies are needed to support and assist as a back-up, with both regular events and unexpected events? Are there resources in neighboring communities you might need?)

Note: People change – titles are better than named individuals. As part of a plan being known, does the person with the title and the backup know their roles and expectations?

#### 3.0 PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

3.1 Legal Considerations (What are the key laws you operate under? Where is and who has the legal authority to make important decisions, especially the decisions most likely to be needed in an emergency? For example: who has authority over the budget,

including buying equipment or supplies quickly to deal with a situation? Who has authority when it comes to public safety, including violent altercations or threats of violence? Who has jurisdiction over public health or animal care matters? Who can make decisions with economic consequences like canceling a performance or event?

- 3.2 Key Areas – Physical, Cultural, and Environmental Features (What are some of the baselines of the facility? Is the water supply from a well or from a municipality? What are the conditions and capabilities of the buildings on the fairgrounds? What levels of physical security including fences, gates, and locks currently exist? How close are areas of concern, including rail lines, power substations, waterways, chemical storage, manufacturing, transportation, and population centers? What kinds and numbers of people are at the facility? Where are the shelters, and evacuation routes?)
- 3.3 Risks, Vulnerabilities, and Likely Scenarios (What types of emergencies should be included in planning? This encompasses the period during the fair as well as non-fair events, and times when the grounds and buildings are closed):
  - 3.3.1 Weather (Lightning, Hail, Tornadoes, Excessive Rain, Excessive Heat, Snowstorms and Snow Accumulation)
  - 3.3.2 Physical Catastrophe (On site - building fire, equipment malfunction, ride or building collapse, flooding, hazardous materials release, loss of electricity and/or water. Off site – chemical releases, fires, public disturbances).
  - 3.3.3 Disease & Contamination (Human health, food safety, animal disease outbreaks and transmission, intentional contamination)
  - 3.3.4 Other Concerns (Human injuries, loose animals, injured animals, lost visitors, protestors, crowd panic, bomb threats, theft, cyberattacks)
- 4.0 CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS
  - 4.1 General (The framework for the actions that will take place during the response to an incident. Who determines when the response plan gets activated? What actions are needed and in what order? Who oversees and is responsible?)

- 4.2 Notification & Communications (How is information shared? This includes physical issues – is there a public address system; do staff, key volunteers, and key vendors have radios, telephones, etc? What are the contingencies if there is no electricity or if your main methods of communications are down? Can key staff be reached quickly to take action, and can the public be alerted in an effective and efficient manner? It also includes procedural and structured decision making – who has responsibility to call/contact various people on and off site? Do those people have the training and knowledge to complete the tasks?)
- 4.3 Public Information (Who speaks for the organization, especially when some key staff are involved in the immediate response? Who speaks to the media, answers their questions and puts out official statements? How are messages developed, approved, and disseminated, including the physical components of writing, printing, faxing, posting to social media, etc?)
- 4.4 Response (What physical items are necessary for a response, including first aid kits, livestock chutes and gates, etc.? What types of responders are necessary, and what levels of training do they have? What skills and equipment are available from fair/event staff and volunteers, and what skills and equipment are available locally, and at the state or federal level? Can you accommodate special needs populations, including the elderly and disabled? What does a National Weather Service Severe Thunderstorm Watch trigger? A Severe Thunderstorm Warning?)
- 4.5 Recovery (How do you get back to normal? What are the key steps that, if taken quickly, will help to reduce the time it takes to recover, both physically and culturally? What will it take to regain the public's confidence?)
- 5.0 REVIEW AND UPDATE (How often is the plan reviewed and updated, and who ensures it gets updated? Who makes the new copies and collects the old copies? Who organizes the training on the updates and training on the plan for new staff and volunteers?)
- 6.0 APPROVAL (Who has responsibility to evaluate and approve the plan?)
- 7.0 APPENDICES (Can include a wide range of items, including):
  - A. 24/7 Contact information for:
    - 1. Fair Board
    - 2. Fair Staff

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3. Key volunteers
  4. Utility Contacts
  5. Law Enforcement and Security Services
  6. Fire, Hazardous Materials Experts
  7. Emergency Medical Services and Hospitals
  8. Local Health Department
  9. Local Emergency Management & Preparedness
  10. Veterinary expertise
  11. Insurance and Legal assistance
  12. Area Road Commission
  13. Relevant State entities (State Police, Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development, Health and Human Services, Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, other Licensing and Regulatory agencies).
- B. Maps of the Fairgrounds, and maps of the immediate surrounding area. Includes identified areas and back-up areas for staging, operations, accessibility, securable areas. Locations of water valves, fuse boxes, electrical panels, etc.
- C. Directions for Operating P.A. System, and other important instructions (including radio procedures, how to change voicemail recording, where to find keys, etc).
- D. Where your operations center/command center will be located, and who is needed in it.
- E. Public Education Messages (possible examples that could be used as a draft template to speed up response).
- F. Animal Care Resources (Feed, Bedding, and Confinement)
- G. Guidelines for Handling Horses, Cattle and Other Livestock During Emergencies
- H. Public Health Resources
- I. Veterinary Resources, including bio-security
- J. Volunteer Resources