



Partnership Alliance for Safer Schools

WHITE PAPER: 11 Safety and Security Policies Overlooked by School Teams at Athletic Events: A Guide for Administrators and Safety Personnel

The volunteers who make up the Partner Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS) bring together their research and expertise from the education, public safety, and industry communities to develop and support a coordinated approach to make effective use of proven security practices for schools. The PASS team is also dedicated to developing white papers on specific school-safety topics.

The content in these white papers may point to specific products, brands, or organizations as illustrations of how certain safety and security measures are implemented. PASS does not endorse specific products or brands. Together, the volunteers and partners of PASS share a single vision: Making all schools safer is both achievable and urgently needed.

AUTHORS

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KEY TOPIC

This white paper focuses on the critical need for tailored security and emergency response plans specifically for athletic events in K-12 schools, recognizing these events as significant community gatherings that require unique safety considerations.

PROBLEM SOLVED

The paper addresses the challenges school administrators and safety professionals face in ensuring safety at athletic events, highlighting common missteps in existing plans. By providing actionable insights and strategies, it aims to enhance crowd management, emergency protocols, and overall safety for students, staff, and spectators.

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MOST RELEVANT FOR

- K-12 security directors

TIME TO READ ([source](#))

4-6 minutes

School athletic events are lively community gatherings that draw large crowds and high energy, but they can also pose security challenges. School administrators and safety professionals must develop tailored security and emergency response plans for these events, which involve numerous components. Consequently, some of these components may be overlooked, leading to potential vulnerabilities. Here are 11 common oversights in developing, implementing, and managing safety and security at school athletic events:

1. Developing and Implementing a Separate Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and Security Plan for Each Athletic Event:

- The EAP outlines procedures for medical and non-medical emergencies.
- The security plan covers overall safety strategies, including pregame checklists, training, admissions, evacuation plans, and emergency communications.
- Both the EAP and the event's security plan should have clear assigned roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols for each plan.
- Utilize a pregame checklist as a road map for each event, and include it in your plans.
- Include local law enforcement, fire officials, and other first responders early on when developing or updating safety plans, rather than involving them later.

2. Using Outdated Plans:

- EAPs and security plans should be updated regularly to reflect current personnel, procedures, technologies, and current best practices. Note: you may have to update them more often based on the emergency team's specific performance during planned drills.
- Ensure plans account for venue changes and consider any changes needed for local law enforcement protocols.

3. One Size Does Not Fit All:

- Different sports require specific plans tailored to their unique environments (e.g., swimming events, basketball games, football stadiums). Include plans for away games as well.
- Avoid using the same plan for different sports, as this can lead to inadequate preparation for venue-specific challenges.

4. Not Providing Adequate Training:

- All staff and volunteers should be properly trained in emergency procedures and security protocols specific to each event type and venue. All training should be documented and signed off by the individual receiving the training.
- Training for an evacuation is often inadequate, or in some cases, overlooked. Develop detailed evacuation plans, including site maps and communication for each venue or type of event.
- Provide regular drills to improve readiness.

5. Setting Spectator Policies and Procedures:

- Specify what spectators can bring into the facility, e.g. the use of clear bags or bag searches. Provide rules around conduct and entry protocols and make sure that both the security team and guests entering the venue know what the rules are ahead of time.
- Be sure to include game day policies on school websites, include them in safety/security handouts when purchasing tickets both online and when entering at the event, and make them accessible via a QR code for quick reference.
- Announce the rules for conduct or re-entry at the start of the event.

6. Managing the Crowd:

- Your crowd management strategies should include how to control entry and exit points, manage event ticketing operations, and handle large crowds efficiently.
- Teach crowd monitoring and de-escalation skills for better handling of fights and crowd behavior.

7. Lack of Clear Communication Protocols:

- Establish clear communication channels for use during emergencies, such as designated radio channels or emergency cell phone protocols. Using standards like ICS 205, which outlines radio communication protocols used by NEMA and FEMA, can help clarify your communication strategy for events.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are familiar with these protocols and have access to necessary communication devices.
- Public address (PA) announcements should be developed, as they are typically underutilized in their capability to inform and educate spectators and staff at events.

8. Insufficient Medical Support:

- Ensure there is adequate medical support available at each event, including trained medical personnel and fully stocked emergency kits.
- Medical support should be easily accessible to quickly address any injuries or medical emergencies.
- Provide fully stocked emergency kits, and require athletic directors/coaches to bring them to every athletic event.

9. Neglecting Parking and Traffic Management:

- Develop plans for monitoring parking areas, controlling traffic flow, and ensuring emergency vehicle access.
- Designate specific areas for emergency vehicles, and clearly communicate these locations to staff and first responders.

10. Ignoring Weather-Related Contingencies:

- Have contingency plans in place for severe weather events, such as thunderstorms or extreme heat.
- Have designated locations for evacuating spectators or moving events indoors if necessary.

11. Overlooking Post-Emergency Activities:

- After an emergency, be sure to complete a staff debrief and assess the response. Update the plans as a result of lessons learned.
- Always include the post-event review as part of your drills to help provide continuous improvement.

By addressing these more common oversights, administrators and safety personnel can better prepare for and manage the unique challenges of athletic event safety and security.

So, where do we start? Enhancing safety at K-12 athletic events requires a strategic approach that begins with a thorough assessment of current practices. School administrators and security professionals must acknowledge the limitations of both time and budget while remaining committed to prioritizing safety. By identifying key vulnerabilities and implementing manageable solutions — such as updating communication methods and leveraging technology — schools can create a more secure environment for students, families, and staff. Ultimately, fostering a culture of safety is not just about resources; it's about collaboration, awareness, and a proactive mindset that ensures every event can be enjoyed without unnecessary risk.

References

The following organizations provide actionable resources for safety and security planning:

[National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security](#)

[SchoolSafety.gov](https://www.schoolsafety.gov)

[Partner Alliance for Safer Schools \(PASS\) School Safety and Security Guidelines](#)