


A photograph of three people sitting in an audience. On the left, a Black man with a beard and glasses is clapping. In the middle, a woman with curly hair is smiling. On the right, an older woman with short white hair is also smiling. They are all looking towards the right side of the frame.

Event planning:

A guide for charities
and not-for-profit
organisations

A collection of decorative blue shapes on a yellow background, including a large light blue semi-circle, a medium blue circle, a small white circle, and a large dark blue semi-circle.

Contents

Holding events are a great way to raise funds for your organisation, to bring the community together and even spread awareness of your cause. Although it is great exposure, events come without their own risks.

In this document, we'll be looking at all the steps involved in planning an event. Take a look at the areas we'll be covering below.



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People

The first thing to consider when planning an event is to think about the people who will be involved.

You will need to identify key roles and responsibilities within the team you put together. Depending on the size of your event, health and safety advice may be needed and you may need to inform local services, such as fire and rescue and the environmental health service.

Speak with your local authority to make them aware of your plans and whether there are any other services that need to be notified.



Choosing the location

The venue chosen for the event should be large enough to allow those attending to feel safe and comfortable and to provide safe access and exit.

Make sure to notify neighbours of the event. It's best to visit the venue before making any decisions so you can picture how it will be. This will also help to determine entry/exit points.

Tips for choosing a venue:

- Review the venue capacity and whether it is suitable for the amount of people you expect to attend.
- Take note of any potential hazards such as ditches, slopes, conditions of footpaths and whether there are any overhead power lines.
- Consider whether there is easy access for people using public transport.
- Confirm that emergency services can access the venue easily.
- Parking facilities for attendees, suppliers and exhibitors.
- Entry to and from the site for both pedestrians and vehicles
- Check that existing site services are in a suitable condition.
- Make lighting arrangements if the event is taking place outside daylight hours.

Pick a venue that offers flexibility in case there's bad weather. Indoor venues give a more controlled environment, but if your event must be outside, include a backup plan.

This could include tents, marquees, or an indoor space that can accommodate attendees if needed.

Risk assessments

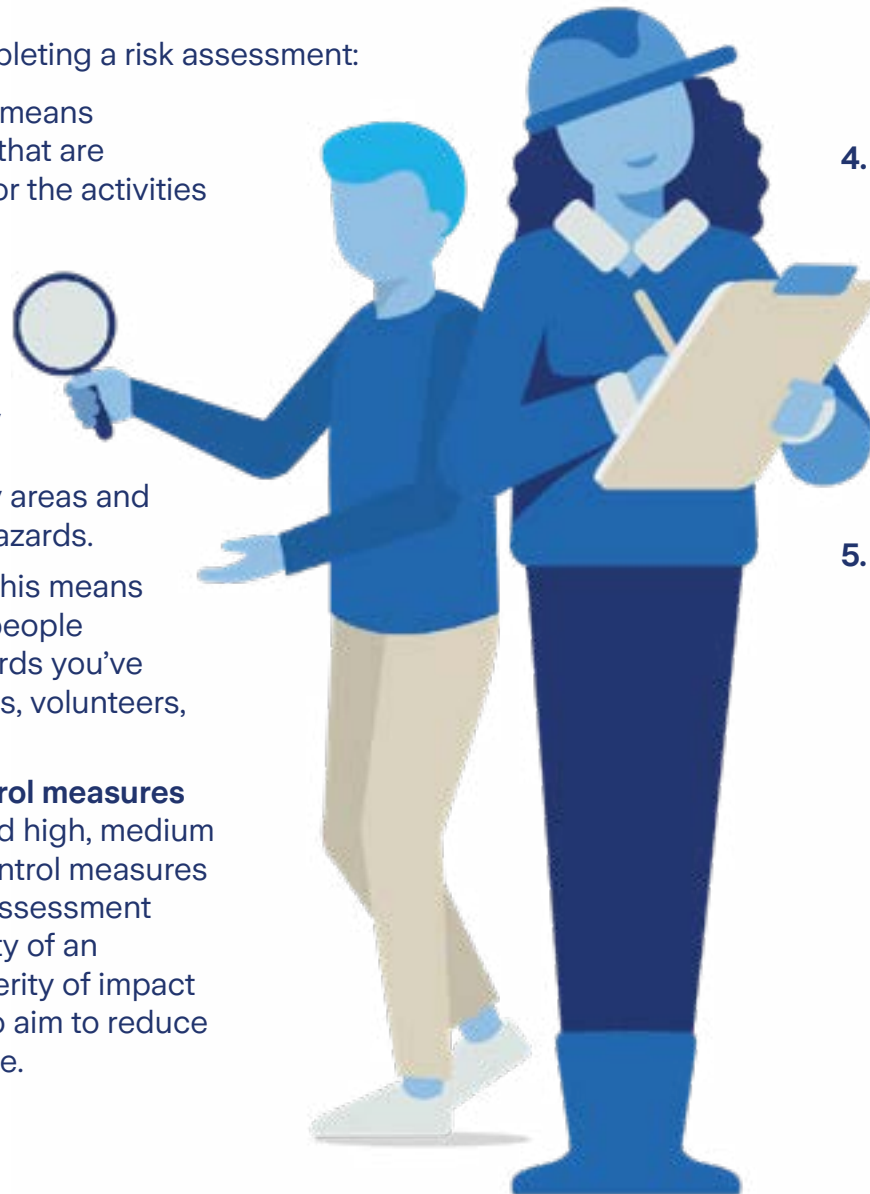
Risk assessments are an essential part of identifying the hazards associated with the event, determining the necessary control measures and recording the steps you have taken to make the event as safe as it can be. They should be completed before the event and kept under review throughout the event, with changes made as necessary.

Here are 5 steps to follow when completing a risk assessment:

- 1. Highlight potential hazards.** This means identifying all significant hazards that are associated with the location and/or the activities that you'll be carrying out.

A good tip is to walk around your chosen venue and talk to people who have hired it before or are currently using it. Think about any accidents or incidents that have already happened to help identify areas and activities that have the greatest hazards.

- 2. Evaluate who may be affected.** This means highlight the different groups of people that could be harmed by the hazards you've identified. For example, employees, volunteers, attendees and children.
- 3. Assess the level of risk and control measures needed.** Are the hazards identified high, medium or low risk, bearing in mind the control measures you already have in place? Your assessment should be based on the probability of an incident taking place and the severity of impact if it does take place. Remember to aim to reduce the risk to the lowest level possible.



- 4. Document and save risk assessments.** Use a standardised risk assessment form to record your findings. Include the date the review was completed and the person who carried out the assessment. Signing off assessments is good practice. Keep the assessment for an agreed number of years (whether a hard copy or a digital copy), as claims can be made several years after an event has taken place.
- 5. Review and monitor.** Review your assessments on a regular basis, particularly if any changes have been made. Commit to a review schedule with specific dates and deadlines for completion.

Event safety management plan

A safety management plan should be prepared before every event. This is a detailed document that sets out how the event will be organised and notes the arrangements in place to reduce the risk of incidents throughout the event.

Below are some key elements to include when creating your plan:



Site safety

Detail any site regulations and restrictions as well as requirements that are imposed. Include the safety responsibilities of individuals involved and the structural safety information for any temporary structures you're erecting.



Event details

Write a brief description of the event, how it'll be organised, who the target audience is (including expected numbers) and intended venue.



Risk assessment

Keep any completed risk assessments in this section including those that are carried out on the day of the event and the people responsible for carrying them out. Safety inspections and accident reporting steps should be part of your assessment.



Crowd management

Note the number of stewards you expect to have supervise the event and list the chain of command so everyone knows who to speak to in the event of a situation. Any training requirements should also be included.



Agenda & meeting minutes

Detail the dates and times of the events, including any performers that you may have. Clearly state who will be performing or exhibiting. Meeting minutes and a list of attendees should also be recorded.





Transport management

Information on the surrounding area and on-site traffic arrangements including parking facilities and entry/exit points.



Emergency plan & insurance

For smaller events, an emergency plan can be included within this section. For larger events a separate document should be created.

Include insurance cover, names and addresses of insurers as well as certificates and schedules.



Media communications

Agreed process for dealing with the media, this should include contact details of the nominated persons and trainers, employees or volunteers who are involved in the communications.



Employees, volunteers and contractor details

Record everyone with designated responsibilities, including a list of key personnel. Take note of specific duties that people are carrying out, as well as the training they've completed.

A list of contractors, performers and exhibitors names and their contact details will be needed, as well as their insurance cover and risk assessments they'll be completing.



Catering

Record all contact details and the requirements needed for the caterers. Include a copy of the caterers insurance and food safety certificates. If caterers need gas or electricity, include how these will be stored within this plan.



Security, fire safety & first aid

Document security arrangement details for cash collection and track the movements of any cash.

Record and keep fire risk assessments and any fire precautions you put in place. Evacuation details should be detailed in your assessments.

Keep the details of any first aid provided on site and any arrangements you make with local hospitals.



Waste management

Include details of waste management, both during and after the event. Once the event has finished, factor in a clean up operation to return the site to how you found it.



Licensing

Music, alcohol and road closures will need licences. Speak with your local council for more information on how to obtain these.

Weather

The weather can be a major contributor to claims relating to events. When planning your event, make sure to check local weather forecasts and plan for all eventualities. Here are a few weather tips to include when planning your event:

- 1. Season and Climate:** Knowing the weather pattern for the time of year and location of your event is important. For example, summer events might have heatwaves or sudden flash thunderstorms, while winter events could be affected by icy conditions and windstorms. Research the weather for your chosen date and include plans around this within your safety management plan.
- 2. Comfort:** Think about the comfort of guests when taking into account potential weather conditions. For hot weather, include shaded areas, fans, and plenty of water stations. For cold weather, consider suitable heaters that have been safety tested and are appropriately sited, blankets, and hot drinks. Tell your attendees about the expected weather conditions in advance of your event so they can dress appropriately.
- 3. Safety Measures:** Weather can have life threatening safety risks, high winds can make temporary structures unstable, rain can create slippery surfaces and extreme temperatures can lead to heatstroke or hypothermia. Put in place safety measures such as securing tents in place properly, laying down non-slip mats and having first aid and responders on-site, along with regular inspections to check that structures and equipment remain in a safe condition.
- 4. Equipment:** Weather can interrupt the setup and operation of equipment. Electrical equipment needs to be protected from rain and strong winds can damage sound systems. Plan for this weather by having waterproof covers, securing cables and choosing suitable materials to help protect the equipment.
- 5. Communication:** Keep an eye on weather forecasts leading up to the event and inform your attendees and vendors of any changes or backup plans as soon as possible. Using social media, emails and event apps are good ways to keep everyone informed.



Food safety

Food safety should never be compromised, even more so at events. Whether the event is a small summer fete or a large scale festival, steps need to be taken to make sure any food provided is prepared and sold in a safe way.

It should be confirmed that food handlers are properly trained and that there are suitable food safety management arrangements in place, including food hygiene requirements and allergen information.

For more information on food safety, read our article:

▶ [Food hygiene at outdoor events](#)



Fireworks & Bonfire displays

Fireworks and bonfires can be dangerous activities that could harm not only attendees but surrounding properties. Although holding a fireworks display can be an enjoyable and exciting activity, it needs its own separate planning session, alongside the rest of the event.

Ideally, fireworks would be 'set off' by a trained professional who has their own public liability insurance. They should never be set off by a member of the public or someone who is unqualified.

For more detailed information on planning a firework or bonfire event, read our articles below:

▶ [Top tips for firework displays](#)

▶ [How to hold a safe bonfire event](#)

More information

There's a lot to think about when planning an event and we hope you've found this guide useful.

For more information on event planning or any other topics raised in this guide, go to our Zurich News and Insights page which is updated with fresh articles each week.

- [News & Insight | Charity & Community Insurance](#)
- [News & Insight | Town, Parish and Community Insurance](#)
- [News & Insight | Village Halls](#)

