PARAS PROGRAM FOR APPLIED RESEARCH IN AIRPORT SECURITY

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Mitigating Impacts to Airport Security and Operations from Locally Hosted Major Events

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NOTICE

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The members of the technical panel selected to monitor this project and to review this report were chosen for their special competencies and with regard for appropriate balance. The report was reviewed by the technical panel and accepted for publication according to procedures established and overseen by Safe Skies.

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Problem Statements, which are descriptions of security problems or questions for which airports need guidance, form the basis of PARAS projects. Submitted Problem Statements are reviewed once yearly by the Safe Skies Oversight Committee, but can be submitted at any time.

A project panel is formed for each funded problem statement. Project panel members are selected by Safe Skies, and generally consist of airport professionals, industry consultants, technology providers, and members of academia—all with knowledge and experience specific to the project topic. The project panel develops a request of proposals based on the Problem Statement, selects a contractor, provides technical guidance and counsel throughout the project, and reviews project deliverables.

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SUMMARY

Successfully hosting a major event tests an airport's ability to plan, coordinate, adapt, and protect under increased pressure. From managing aircraft overflow to preparing for VIP movements, securing protest activity, supporting dignitary operations, and ensuring rapid response to operational disruptions, locally hosted major events introduce unique and complex challenges across every area of airport operations.

This document outlines the layered strategies that airports can use to maintain operational continuity and security integrity before, during, and after high-impact events. These strategies include proactive contingency planning, stakeholder alignment through the Incident Command System, deliberate crowd management protocols, structured coordination with federal and mutual aid partners, flexible communication and reporting systems, and post-event evaluation methods designed to drive continuous improvement.

While each event presents its own unique requirements, what remains consistent is the need for clearly defined roles and responsibilities, practiced procedures, effective communication with various stakeholders, and strong interagency and intra-agency coordination. Security and operations must be reinforced through coordination built in the planning phase, sustained through execution, and refined through structured evaluation, documentation, and performance.

Airports that approach event planning as a full operational cycle—from pre-planning through recovery and review—position themselves to meet not only the demands of a single event but also to evolve their capabilities over time to ensure continuous improvement. With the right planning, partnerships, and structure, and the discipline to learn from each experience, airports can safely and effectively support even the most high-profile events with confidence and proficiency.

PARAS ACRONYMS

ACRP	Airport Cooperative Research Program
AIP	Airport Improvement Program
AOA	Air Operations Area
ARFF	Aircraft Rescue & Firefighting
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOT	Department of Transportation
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FSD	Federal Security Director
GPS	Global Positioning System
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IT	Information Technology
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
RFP	Request for Proposals
ROI	Return on Investment
SIDA	Security Identification Display Area
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSI	Sensitive Security Information
TSA	Transportation Security Administration

ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS, INITIALISMS, AND SYMBOLS

AAR	After-Action Report
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASP	Airport Security Program
ATC	Air Traffic Control
CBP	Customs and Border Protection
COTA	Circuit of the Americas
DNC	Democratic National Convention
EDC	Explosive Detection Canine
EDS	Explosive Detection System
EMS	Emergency Management Services
ETD	Explosive Trace Detector
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FBO	Fixed Base Operator
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIS	Federal Inspection Services
GA	General Aviation
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
HVL	Hired Vehicles and Limousines
IC	Incident Commander
ICS	Incident Command System
LEO	Law Enforcement Officer
LHR	London Heathrow Airport
LPR	License Plate Reader

NBA	National Basketball Association
NECP	National Emergency Communications Plan
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NOTAM	Notice to Airmen
NSSE	National Special Security Events
PA	Public Address
PACE	Primary, Alternate, Contingency, Emergency
PIO	Public Information Officer
PPR	Prior Permission Required
RNC	Republican National Convention
RON	Remain Overnight
RV	Recreational Vehicle
SB50	Super Bowl 50
SEAR	Special Event Assessment Rating
STA	Security Threat Assessment
STMP	Special Traffic Management Program
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
TDY	Temporary Duty
TFR	Temporary Flight Restrictions
UAS	Unmanned Aircraft Systems
UC	Unified Command
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
VIP	Very Important Person
VoIP	Voice over Internet Protocol
V/POTUS	Vice/President of the United States

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Airports are integral to the success of any locally hosted major event, but they face many challenges to minimize the impact these events have on their security and operations.[1] Airports may be proficient at managing peak travel periods, such as those around holidays, but major events such as sporting championships and festivals can create spikes of significantly increased passenger and aircraft traffic that can impact the airport's risk profile.

These complex and often high-profile major events can put much greater demand on the airport's already constrained resources, services, amenities, and public safety functions. This can impact airport operations in several ways:

- Increased numbers of passengers at check-in counters, security checkpoints, rental car counters, and international arrivals facilities create crowded conditions that could be targeted or exploited by bad actors.
- Unpredictable and congested vehicle traffic—including activity at hotel shuttle, rideshare, and other commercial vehicle pickup areas—complicates monitoring of activities and increases vulnerability to unauthorized or hostile acts.
- High demand placed on concessions, restrooms, terminal capacity, and other amenities strains resources and reduces customer service levels, increasing passenger stress, environmental stressors (restroom cleanliness, noise levels, etc.), and potential for unruly behavior.
- Increased air traffic, ramp management needs, fuel supplies, special cargo handling, and emergency response requirements strain resources, potentially reducing operational oversight and security effectiveness.
- Additional event wayfinding and signage, including those in universal or foreign languages, can cause confusion.
- High-profile events can increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior, theft, violence, or terrorist acts by attracting individuals with malicious intent motivated by ideological or political beliefs.
- Increased potential for organized or spontaneous protests near or on airport property can introduce additional security risks, disrupt passenger flow, and strain law enforcement and operational resources.

Poor planning for how the airport will support a major event, or inadequate resources and contingency measures, could allow minor operational issues to escalate into larger security concerns. Without clear plans in place to manage the event operations, routine issues such as delayed departures or roadway congestion can escalate into confusion, crowding, and frustration that increase the risk of disruptive behavior and compromise the airport's security posture.

The airports interviewed for this research provided dozens of examples of locally hosted large-scale events that impact the airport. Examples of events reviewed during the research include:

[1] For the purposes of this document, a *major event* is a large-scale, off-airport gathering that takes place in the airport's surrounding community, and which significantly impacts airport security or operations. This excludes the typical busy travel periods (e.g., Thanksgiving, Christmas, Independence Day, Labor Day, Spring Break, Memorial Day).

- Political and Industry Events
  - Democratic National Convention (DNC)
  - Republican National Convention (RNC)
  - United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)
  - Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
  - International Association of Chiefs of Police Conference
  - Vice/President of the United States (V/POTUS) visits (for State, campaign, or personal)
  - Summit of the Americas
  - State Senator and Representative and other Very Important Person (VIP)/dignitary visits
  - Large-scale private shareholder meetings
  - Political protests and demonstrations
- Sporting Events
  - Sports championships and exhibition games, including:
    - National Football League Super Bowl
    - Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup
    - National Basketball Association (NBA) All-Star Game
    - Major League Baseball World Series
    - Union Cycliste Internationale Para-Cycling Road World Cup
    - Collegiate sports tournaments and high-profile games
  - Racing (e.g., Formula 1 Grand Prix races, Indianapolis 500, Kentucky Derby, Boston Marathon)
  - Golf tournaments (e.g., Professional Golfers' Association Championships)
- Entertainment, Cultural, and Ceremonial Events
  - Taylor Swift Concert
  - Burning Man Festival
  - Patriot's Day in Washington DC
  - Military boot camp graduation
  - Hot air balloon festivals
  - VIP/Celebrity funerals (e.g., Reverend Billy Graham's funeral)

1.1 Navigating This Document

This document was developed based on extensive research, including a comprehensive literature review, structured interviews with airport stakeholders, and the project team's operational experience. Specific practices were drawn directly from real-world case studies and interview findings. In many cases, these practices were observed across multiple airports, or were shared under the condition of anonymity and have been synthesized to protect confidentiality while still representing operational realities.

While the report addresses many operational elements, every effort has been made to center security-specific planning considerations throughout. In practice, aviation security cannot be isolated from broader operational planning, as the two are inherently linked. Decisions about crowd flow, traffic patterns, baggage handling, and terminal access all have direct security implications. Effective security

planning relies on anticipating how operational activities will shape vulnerabilities, access control challenges, and incident response needs. As such, the document reflects this integration by embedding security considerations within the full scope of event preparation while maintaining clear emphasis on regulatory obligations, mitigation strategies, and security-specific procedures. This approach ensures the guidance is both realistic and actionable for airport operators planning for major events.

Readers can use this section as a guide to identify relevant portions of the report. The summaries below provide an overview of each main section.

Section 2: Knowledge Building
This section provides information on Incident Command System (ICS) principles and planning exercises that can be used to prepare for and manage a locally hosted major event.

Section 3: Event Scope of Impact
This section focuses on factors that airports can evaluate to better understand the scope of an event's potential impact and allocate resources accordingly. It provides guidance on forecasting demand, evaluating capacity, and performing detailed security risk assessments, while leveraging lessons from past events and intelligence-sharing networks to ensure readiness and resilience.

Section 4: Event Coordination Planning
This section covers the coordination, planning, and communication efforts airports must undertake to support locally hosted major events. It outlines the importance of early stakeholder identification and coordination. Topics include establishing planning committees, building communication structures, and maintaining updated contact lists.

Section 5: Strategic and Tactical Planning
This section discusses operational planning activities airports may undertake to support major events. It covers tactical adjustments to airside, terminal, and landside operations, including temporary changes and amendments to the Airport Security Program (ASP). It highlights the need for plans that address flight activity changes, gate assignments, baggage handling, ground transportation coordination, crowd control, concessions, and signage and messaging. It also covers the development of contingency plans to manage increased or unusual demands.

Section 6: Strategies for Specific Event Types
This section outlines strategies for managing specific types of events, including high-profile visits, public demonstrations, and increased media or fan activity during major events.

Section 7: Post-Event Evaluation and Improvement Planning
This section emphasizes the importance of structured post-event evaluations to capture lessons learned, assess operational performance, and drive continuous improvement in airport event planning. It outlines best practices for organizing debriefs, reviewing operational data and incident timelines, and documenting findings.

Section 8: Summary of Options and Strategies
This final section provides an overview of the strategies discussed throughout the report.

Appendices
The appendices include planning and organizational checklists that airport operators can use to support security preparations for major events. Also featured is a case study on the Alternative Measures implemented during Super Bowl 50 to streamline badging for temporary staff.

SECTION 2: KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

Major events introduce both predictable pressures and unexpected variables. Airports can respond effectively to both through early planning, aligned terminology, routine collaboration, and clearly defined escalation paths and response protocols. Applying ICS principles, expanding access to real-time reporting tools, and conducting relevant, scenario-based exercises allow airports to foster a collective state of readiness across all involved partners. These approaches equip airport stakeholders with the tools, processes, and shared language needed to respond cohesively during event operations.

2.1 Event Response Frameworks

While ICS is traditionally associated with emergency response, many airports successfully apply ICS principles to planned major events. Leveraging the ICS framework to manage the increased demands of locally hosted major events can greatly assist the airport with strategic and operational planning, organizing resources, clarifying roles and responsibilities, establishing accountability and timelines, effectively communicating, and coordinating response efforts.

Integrating ICS practices into event planning ensures stakeholders understand their roles, responsibilities, and reporting structure, supporting faster decision-making and more efficient operations during both normal event activity and potential emergencies.

PLAIN LANGUAGE AND CONSISTENT TERMINOLOGY

ICS emphasizes the use of common terminology to prevent confusion between agencies and disciplines. This includes developing standardized communication across all operational briefings and plans using ICS terminology, avoiding local or technical jargon and acronyms unfamiliar to external partners, and using plain language radio procedures and command titles. This is particularly important during multi-agency events where public safety, federal, and mutual aid partners must coordinate seamlessly.

OPERATIONAL BRIEFINGS AND REHEARSALS

Hosting regular operational planning meetings in advance of the event builds stakeholder familiarity with both ICS processes and other key stakeholders. Airports can further promote the use of ICS processes by:

- Conducting event planning sessions and tabletop exercises within the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or command post environment to familiarize participants with their assigned workspaces
- Organizing pre-event briefings that clearly assign roles within the ICS structure (e.g., Operations Section Chief, Safety Officer, Public Information Officer [PIO])
- Rehearsing processes such as resource request procedures, communication protocols, and emergency decision-making

Regular planning meetings, briefings, and rehearsals foster a shared understanding of ICS roles and processes, enabling stakeholders to operate more effectively as a unified team. Familiarity with the physical command environment and practiced coordination procedures improves confidence, communication, and response efficiency during both routine operations and emergencies.

ICS FORMS FOR STRUCTURED EVENT MANAGEMENT

To support the ICS, FEMA developed a standardized set of forms designed to record, manage, and communicate critical information during incident response and event operations. These forms provide a

consistent framework for documenting objectives, resource assignments, operational activities, and status updates across all phases of an incident or major event.

Incorporating ICS forms into event operations planning and management offers several key benefits, particularly for complex security environments with multiple stakeholders:

- **Improved coordination across stakeholders:** ICS forms provide a consistent framework for recording and sharing information across local, state, federal, and private sector partners, enhancing coordination during rapidly evolving conditions.
- **Standardized communication:** Documented objectives, assignments, and updates help ensure that all agencies and stakeholders are operating with the same information, reducing miscommunication.
- **Structured operational planning:** ICS forms support a methodical approach to defining incident objectives, setting priorities, assigning tasks, and tracking resources.
- **Increased accountability:** Formal documentation of decisions, resource usage, and assignments creates a clear record of actions taken, improving accountability among responding agencies and stakeholders.
- **Stronger situational awareness:** By capturing current operational conditions and resource status, ICS forms provide leadership with a comprehensive, real-time picture of the event environment.
- **Nationwide consistency:** ICS forms are widely recognized across emergency management and public safety sectors, making them an effective tool for aligning processes across agencies and jurisdictions.
- **Resource management and tracking:** ICS forms help document and manage personnel, equipment, and facility assignments in real time, supporting both operational efficiency and security oversight.
- **Post-event analysis and lessons learned:** A complete set of ICS documentation provides valuable insight for after-action reports (AAR), supporting continuous improvement in future event planning and response.
- **Adaptability to event complexity:** ICS forms are scalable and applicable to events of any size or complexity, from short-duration VIP visits to multi-day, multi-agency events with large public attendance.

The use of ICS forms is not intended to replace existing Airport Emergency Plans or procedures. The forms complement operational planning by providing a clear structure for documenting critical information in a standardized, widely recognized format. However, effective use of ICS forms requires commitment and deliberate planning with airport leadership, law enforcement, federal partners, and tenant stakeholders to assign roles, responsibilities, and the command structure.

Templates for ICS forms, along with guidance on their use, are available through FEMA's ICS Resource Center.[2] Many forms identified as relevant to locally hosted major event planning have been linked throughout the document. Airports may choose to use these templates directly or customize them to reflect event-specific operational needs.

[2] **FEMA ICS Resource Center:** https://training.fema.gov/icsresource/icsforms.aspx

2.1.1 Incident Command & Emergency Operations Center Activation

Planning for locally hosted major events requires airports to carefully consider how command and control functions will operate during the event. The ICS and the EOC are the primary structures supporting airport incident response. While these systems are closely related, they serve different purposes and are activated based on the scale, complexity, and duration of the incident.

INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM FOR FIELD RESPONSE

The ICS structure, as outlined in FEMA's National Incident Management System (NIMS), provides a standardized framework for managing resources, communication, and operational decision-making during emergencies or high-impact events. ICS is designed to function in the field and provides immediate, on-scene leadership through an Incident Commander (IC) or UC.

During major events, ICS may be activated even in the absence of an emergency to support centralized management of crowd control, security operations, and real-time decision-making in public-facing spaces such as terminals, curbside areas, or the airfield. ICS provides flexibility to scale operations up or down based on incident complexity and is often the preferred structure for handling real-time security concerns during the event itself.

Using ICS during locally hosted major events can provide several operational and security benefits, including:

- Clear chain of command
- Centralized situational awareness
- Unified communication between agencies
- Documented resource use and decisions
- Faster response to emerging security risks

In most cases, Airport Operations, Law Enforcement, and Fire/Rescue will form the UC, with the designated IC determined by the nature of the incident. For example, law enforcement typically assumes IC for security threats; Fire/Rescue for fires, hazardous materials, or aircraft accidents; and Airport Operations for crowd management, capacity issues, or infrastructure disruptions. At many airports, the Operations role may be divided further between airside and terminal operations; airside personnel may assume IC during weather-related events, while terminal operations may lead during landside disruptions.

IC responsibilities may also evolve over the course of a complex event response. For example, during a major crowd surge caused by an early-arriving wave of event attendees, Airport Operations may serve as the initial IC to manage crowd control, terminal access, and queuing procedures. If the situation escalates to a medical emergency or physical altercation within the crowd, Fire/Rescue or Law Enforcement may assume IC depending on the dominant need. Once the immediate incident is stabilized, control may revert back to Airport Operations to oversee re-entry and restore passenger flow. In scenarios like this, activating the EOC may be necessary to support interagency coordination, deploy supplemental staff, and manage public messaging.

Establishing an event-specific Command Post in or near the impacted area allows for rapid coordination between security personnel, airport staff, TSA, airline representatives, and other critical stakeholders in the field. This is only possible if plans are discussed ahead of time and key players are co-located or in constant contact.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER FOR EXTENDED OR COMPLEX INCIDENTS

The EOC is a physical or virtual location where airport leadership and event planners can coordinate long-duration or complex response efforts that exceed routine command post operations. Unlike ICS, the EOC is not typically activated for short-term major events but is generally reserved for:

- Events with significant public safety risk or security concerns (e.g., protests, civil unrest, active threats)
- Incidents expected to exceed normal operational durations or resource availability (e.g., consecutive major events)
- Scenarios requiring cross-functional coordination from non-field agencies (e.g., Finance, Planning, Communications, Legal, Tenant Relations)

An EOC supports the field Incident Command and UC by providing:

- Policy-level decision-making support
- Resource procurement and allocation (e.g., additional security staff, barricades, emergency supplies)
- Tracking and documentation of incidents for post-event evaluation
- Situational reporting to senior leadership and external stakeholders
- Long-range operational planning (e.g., transitioning from response to recovery)

If the airport anticipates EOC activation for a locally hosted major event, planning should include:

- Identification of key personnel who will staff the EOC during the event, and a staffing schedule to minimize burnout
- Pre-assignment of roles and responsibilities, including those with authority to request resources, issue media releases, and provide situational updates
- Development and testing of activation procedures to ensure all systems (phones, radios, displays, data feeds) are operational
- Verification that clear communication channels exist between the EOC, the field Incident Command Post, and any mutual aid partners

INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM VS. EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER ACTIVATION

During major events, a critical early step in establishing an effective command and response structure is to determine the appropriate response level. This classification not only guides staffing and resource allocation but also helps clarify how the airport will manage command, control, and communication—including whether the ICS structure alone is sufficient or if the EOC needs to be activated.

Most locally hosted major events will rely heavily on ICS and a field Command Post to manage real-time security and operational concerns. However, activating the EOC may be appropriate to provide a higher level of coordination, resource management, and situational awareness across the airport and regional partners for high-profile events with elevated security risks, such as political conventions, Super Bowl, V/POTUS visits, or NSSE/SEAR events.

For some events, a hybrid approach may be the most appropriate. This may involve activating a Command Post in the terminal or airside for operational control, with a scaled down EOC activation to focus on logistics, communications, and strategic planning.

One interviewed airport noted that classifying an event is not always straightforward, especially for personnel less familiar with emergency management terminology. One recurring source of confusion is the difference between FEMA's Disaster Levels and the FAA's Aircraft Emergency Alert Categories. Although both use a three-tiered structure, their meanings are reversed. For example, FEMA's Level 1 refers to a "Disaster" and is reserved for the most severe events requiring an extreme amount of support. Conversely, FAA's Alert 1 is "Standby Only," used when an aircraft is experiencing a minor event but is expected to land safely. Without clear context, this mismatch can lead to misunderstandings about the severity of an incident or the scale of response required.

To address this internal communication challenge, the airport developed a localized event classification scale using Olympic medal colors:

- **Bronze** (small event): Routine operational event manageable by key personnel using ICS; no EOC activation – Incident Command manages response in the field
- **Silver** (large event): Significant operational impact requiring additional stakeholder involvement; ICS activated with expanded coordination; EOC may be activated if sustained operations or multi-agency coordination is needed
- **Gold** (emergency): Complex or prolonged event requiring full stakeholder participation and maximum coordination; full EOC activation and Unified Command structure with full ICS documentation

This framework was considered a success within the airport's operating environment, helping to reduce confusion and align expectations across operational, security, and emergency management teams.

2.2 Planning Exercises

While every commercial US airport is required to conduct tabletop exercises in accordance with FAA and TSA requirements, these are often tailored to life safety and security emergencies and protocols rather than simulating major events. However, including event-specific scenarios in tabletop exercises is highly beneficial, particularly to validate plans and ensure readiness for elevated traffic, public visibility, airport-wide coordination, and security risks associated with such events. Even small and informal scenarios discussed within the security department can provide great insight into the event planning.

The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) is a standardized framework developed by FEMA to help organizations design, conduct, and evaluate emergency planning exercises.[3] It promotes consistent planning and assessment across agencies, ensuring that exercises are realistic, goal-driven, and lead to meaningful improvements. HSEEP emphasizes a full exercise cycle from planning through after-action reporting and implementation of corrective actions to build preparedness and enhance operational capabilities.

HSEEP outlines two primary types of exercises:

- **Discussion-based exercises** are designed to familiarize participants with roles, responsibilities, plans, and coordination procedures. These can take the form of seminars, workshops, walkthroughs, tabletop exercises, or simulation games. Discussion-based exercises are particularly useful in the pre-event phase to walk through new or revised plans, identify potential friction points, and build alignment across airport departments and external stakeholders.

[3] **DHS HSEEP:** https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/exercises/hseep

- **Operations-based exercises** are structured to validate capabilities and test plans in real time. These include drills, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises that simulate actual deployment of resources and personnel. While more resource-intensive, operations-based drills can validate execution under event conditions, such as responding to crowd surges, suspicious items, or traffic disruptions.

While not every state agency offers the same level of involvement or resources, all US states maintain an emergency management agency that can be a valuable partner. Working with state emergency management agencies can significantly strengthen an airport's planning and preparedness efforts for major events. These agencies often have planning staff, exercise facilitators, and federal grant knowledge that can be leveraged to enhance the realism of airport tabletop exercises, connect the airport to regional mutual aid and response networks, coordinate with emergency responders outside of the airport community, and align airport planning efforts with state and federal emergency frameworks. Many of these agencies will support development and facilitation of airport-specific tabletop exercises at no cost to the airport. This collaboration serves as a force multiplier for airport staff as well as helps bridge gaps between airport operations and broader state-level emergency planning.

Engaging state emergency management agencies early in the planning process ensures exercises and coordination activities are better resourced, more collaborative, and reflective of the broader emergency management landscape. This strategy is especially valuable for airports with limited internal planning resources or those hosting a major event for the first time.[4]

ACRP Synthesis 72: *Tabletop and Full-Scale Emergency Exercises for General Aviation, Non-Hub, and Small Hub Airports* provides planning templates and adaptable emergency management approaches that apply to airports of any size.

PARAS 0051: *Guidance for Airport Security Exercises* outlines how to apply FEMA's HSEEP framework to build a comprehensive airport security exercise program. It includes practical tools, templates, sample scenarios, and fully developed examples to support the design and execution of various exercise types.

HSEEP has compiled a website of resources and templates airports can use and modify to fit their needs when planning, conducting, and debriefing on locally hosted major event planning exercises.

2.2.1 Exercise Topic Identification

Incorporating scenarios for locally hosted major events into airport exercises can strengthen interagency coordination, identify capability gaps, and increase stakeholder confidence ahead of high-risk or high-profile events. This integration can effectively combine the airport's need to test their capabilities related to major events with their regulatory exercise requirements mandated by TSA and FAA. Airports can identify exercise topics through a variety of methods, including:

- Review of findings from threat and risk assessments performed during event scoping
- Documentation of topics or concerns submitted by internal or external stakeholders
- Survey of event stakeholders for potential testing scenarios

[4] Airports can find their state emergency management agency at https://www.usa.gov/state-emergency-management.

Capturing and tracking these topic ideas throughout the event planning process helps ensure no critical scenario is overlooked and provides a structured pipeline of potential injects or topics for tabletop exercises.

This approach can also help break down silos between agencies, foster creative problem-solving, and reinforce the importance of unified command (UC) principles during real-world events.

2.2.2 Example Exercise Security Injects

Airports can benefit from tailored injects (simulated incident updates) that reflect the range of security and operational challenges likely to emerge during a locally hosted major event. Well-designed injects support realism and ensure the scenario stays dynamic and responsive, allowing participants to practice critical thinking under pressure.

The following example injects provide a starting point for airports seeking to expand their exercise scenarios and better evaluate contingency planning, stakeholder readiness, and overall event response capabilities. These can be tailored to more accurately reflect potential or expected concerns.

PROTEST AND DEMONSTRATION INJECTS

Protests and demonstrations (planned and unplanned) are a common risk during high-profile or politically sensitive events. Protest-related injects can test airport readiness, security coordination, and response procedures for managing large groups and public disruptions. These injects also help evaluate communication plans, law enforcement response times, and crowd management strategies.

- **Protestors Blocking Terminal Entrance:** Incorporate into any exercise where large public crowds are already present (e.g., severe weather sheltering, holiday travel). Test law enforcement's ability to clear access routes while maintaining safety.
- **Pop-Up Protest on Terminal Roadway:** Useful to include in exercises testing ground transportation operations or roadway congestion. Evaluate ability to reroute vehicles, coordinate with city police, and maintain emergency access.
- **Social Media Post Organizing a Flash Mob or Protest Inside Terminal:** Integrates well with any scenario involving terminal operations or public safety monitoring. Tests situational awareness, intelligence sharing, and proactive security measures.
- **Secondary Airport Access Point Overwhelmed with Media or Fan Traffic:** Valuable in exercises testing perimeter control or traffic management for VIPs or event operations. Tests the ability to secure sensitive areas and reroute vehicles.

SECURITY DISRUPTION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT INJECTS

Injects involving security threats, suspicious activity, or unexpected disruptions can help exercise airport teams' ability to rapidly assess risk, share intelligence, and coordinate responses with law enforcement. These scenarios are particularly relevant during major events with elevated public visibility, increased VIP traffic, or expanded law enforcement presence. They test the airport's adaptability under pressure, interagency coordination, and decision-making when presented with incomplete or quickly evolving information.

- **Law Enforcement Canine Alerts on VIP Transport Vehicle:** Suitable for any exercise involving VIP movement or checkpoint operations. Tests procedures for handling potential explosive or narcotics detection involving VIP passengers.

- **VIP Convoy Route Blocked by Disabled Vehicle:** Useful in traffic management or dignitary protection exercises. Tests route diversion plans, escort coordination, and real-time communication with ground units.
- **Credible Threat Received from Federal Law Enforcement Mid-Event:** Can be integrated into any ongoing exercise. Tests the ability to receive, interpret, and act on real-time threat intelligence from federal partners.
- **Tip from Ride-Share Driver Reporting Suspicious Passenger Behavior:** Appropriate for exercises focused on landside security, crowds, or public-area surveillance. Tests reporting protocols and public engagement strategies.
- **Overdose Incident in Public Restroom During Event Surge:** Integrates well with crowd surge, emergency management services (EMS) response, or general public safety exercises. Tests medical response times, law enforcement officer (LEO) coordination, and potential hazmat considerations.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SYSTEMS FAILURE INJECTS

These injects challenge the airport's ability to maintain safe, secure, and efficient operations when critical infrastructure fails or unexpected facility impacts occur during a major event. They test the resilience of contingency plans, the ability to implement manual workarounds, and coordination between security, operations, and maintenance teams.

- **Elevator or Escalator Failure in Crowded Terminal:** Effective in exercises focused on passenger flow, crowd management, or emergency egress. Tests maintenance response, alternate routing, and communication with impacted passengers.
- **Baggage System Failure During Peak Departures:** Suitable for exercises testing terminal operations or airline coordination. Evaluates communication between operations, TSA, and airlines, and strategies for mitigating delayed baggage.
- **Baggage System Failure Affecting Multiple Claim Devices:** Useful to consider how the airport will move incoming bags from the baggage system to a functional claim device to avoid congestion in the system.
- **Critical Equipment Failure:** Applicable to security-focused exercises. Tests readiness to implement manual security measures or redundant communication systems.
- **Loss of Network Connectivity During Event Operations:** Useful for exercises that test communication plans, alternate reporting methods, and maintaining situational awareness without digital tools.
- **Overflow Bus Staging Area Becomes Inaccessible:** Integrates well into exercises testing ground transportation management, weather contingencies, or crowd control. Tests ability to activate secondary staging areas and redirect passengers.

CROWD MANAGEMENT INJECTS

These injects focus on how airports manage the safety and security of people in dense, dynamic environments during a major event. They test crowd management procedures, emergency response coordination, communication strategies, and the ability to maintain security controls while addressing urgent life safety concerns.

- **Medical Emergency in Dense Terminal Crowd:** Ideal for exercises testing access and response challenges in crowded conditions. Evaluates EMS response routing, crowd control, and communication with bystanders.

- **Uncontrolled Evacuation Following Loud Noise in Terminal:** Applicable to exercises focused on mass panic scenarios. Tests the ability to quickly assess the cause, deploy law enforcement, and regain crowd control.
- **Queue Collapse at Security Checkpoint:** Useful in testing checkpoint resilience and incident management. Evaluates TSA coordination, passenger flow restoration, and injury response.
- **Elevator Entrapment with Passengers During Peak Crowds:** Relevant to exercises focused on life safety response in congested spaces. Tests coordination between operations, maintenance, and emergency responders.
- **Fire Alarm Activation in Concourse:** Valuable for testing emergency evacuation planning, fire department response, and communication to passengers during non-fire incidents.
- **Lost Child Reported in Terminal During Departure Surge:** Tests coordination between law enforcement, operations, and airline staff to locate and safely reunite a lost child during high passenger volumes.
- **Fan Crowd Gathers at Fixed-Base Operations (FBO) for Celebrity Sighting:** Fits exercises testing General Aviation (GA)/FBO perimeter security, crowd control, and coordination with celebrity security teams.

COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION INJECTS

These injects challenge an airport's ability to manage conflicting information, maintain accurate situational awareness, and coordinate clear messaging across multiple stakeholders. They test the strength of the UC, communication protocols, and response strategies when information reliability is compromised.

- **Conflicting Orders Issued by Multiple Agencies:** Ideal for exercises testing the strength of ICS principles, UC processes, and clarification protocols.
- **Misinformation Spread on Social Media:** Valuable for exercises testing PIO coordination, rumor-control procedures, and response messaging strategy.
- **Disruption of Radio Communications Between EOC and Field Teams:** Relevant for exercises testing communication redundancy plans, technology backup strategies, and field team adaptability.

COMMAND DISRUPTIONS AND OPERATIONAL CONTINUITY INJECTS

These injects are designed to evaluate the airport's resilience when command structure or continuity is challenged. They test the depth of leadership redundancy, clarity of delegation, and adaptability of coordination centers under pressure.

- **ICS Command Staff Member Becomes Unavailable Mid-Event:** Useful for testing succession plans, delegation protocols, and the ability to maintain operational momentum during leadership turnover.
- **Need to Relocate Command Post Due to Infrastructure Failure:** Exercises contingency planning for relocation of command operations and the logistics of maintaining communications and situational awareness during the transition.
- **Mutual Aid Resources Delayed by Traffic Congestion:** Highlights coordination with external responders and the impact of transportation bottlenecks on event support operations.
- **Mutual Aid Resources Unavailable:** Evaluates effectiveness of contingency plans if mutual aid partners are unable to provide expected support.

- **Simultaneous Activation of EOC and Incident Command Post:** Tests alignment between strategic and tactical coordination, and evaluates roles, responsibilities, and communication pathways across both structures.

By incorporating event injects into regular exercise planning, airports can more effectively test their readiness for the complex demands of a major event. Tailored scenarios not only validate contingency plans and resource coordination but also help uncover operational blind spots, clarify roles and responsibilities, and strengthen interagency collaboration to build a more resilient and responsive airport environment.

SECTION 3: EVENT SCOPE OF IMPACT

The degree to which a major event impacts airport security and operations depends on a combination of factors, including the type of event, the expected attendee demographics, staffing levels, and the unique characteristics of the airport itself. Some factors may apply broadly to event types, while others only emerge in specific combinations, such as certain types of events at airports with particular layouts or capacity constraints. It is essential for airport planners to evaluate each event individually and consider how passenger activity, aircraft operations, and vehicle traffic might interact to affect the airport environment.

By evaluating these factors through a proactive, event-specific lens, airports can better understand the scope of each event's potential impact and allocate resources accordingly. This approach supports smoother operations, more robust security, and a more positive experience for passengers and staff alike.

Appendix A includes a checklist that airports can use when assessing the potential event impacts and resource requirements.

3.1 Past Event Evaluations

Documented insights from prior events offer valuable tools for accurately scoping the operational and security impacts of future events. Reviewing AARs, debrief summaries, and planning documentation from similar or previous events can help airports understand the full extent of deviations from normal operations and tailor their planning accordingly.

Airports that host recurring events may already maintain internal archives of post-event reviews. These documents can support future planning by identifying patterns in peak arrival periods, choke points, staffing shortages, or security vulnerabilities. Even if the airport was not previously involved, reviewing this type of documentation from nearby airports or regional partners can provide a solid foundation for estimating expected impacts.

Benchmarking with peer airports that have hosted similar events is also a valuable strategy, especially for first-time host airports. Whether conducted through formal observation programs, informal phone calls, or organized webinars, benchmarking allows airport staff to gather practical lessons on planning structures, stakeholder roles, and successful mitigation strategies. Some airports also send multidisciplinary teams to observe operations during live events, allowing them to return with actionable insights and examples to apply locally. These insights and examples can be incorporated into event checklists and binders.

Heathrow Airport (LHR) prepared for the 2012 London Olympic Games for seven years, consulting with previous Games hosts, including Sydney, Athens, Beijing, and Vancouver, to understand both expected impacts and practical mitigation strategies.

While not every solution will be transferable between airports due to differences in layout, staffing, or airside infrastructure, reviewing a range of approaches allows planners to adapt best practices to fit their own operating environment. Benchmarking also imparts knowledge of security threats and unanticipated adverse conditions that another airport experienced and mitigated. Airports conducting these reviews or benchmarking activities may benefit from exploring the following questions:

- What did event organizers expect from the airport, and how early were expectations communicated?
- Which departments or personnel were included in planning, and what were their roles?
- How did law enforcement support the event, and how was security staffing scaled?
- What crowd management strategies were used, particularly in public or high-traffic zones?
- How was terminal and curbside vehicle traffic managed, and what lessons were learned?
- What adjustments were made to airside operations, including apron use, vehicle gate control, and signage?
- Were temporary amendments to the ASP, Changed Conditions, or Alternative Measures required, and what procedures were adjusted?
- How were operations such as concessions, cargo, or facilities managed during the event?
- Which federal agencies played a significant role, and what specific requirements did they impose?
- What was the overall planning timeline, and which decision points were most critical?
- Were there checklists, templates, or operational playbooks that facilitated event support and management?

By incorporating these lessons and references early in the planning timeline, airports can build a more accurate impact assessment, avoid repeating past mistakes, and strengthen interagency coordination in advance of the event.

3.2 Demand Forecasting

Forecasting is the process of estimating future operational demand over a defined period to inform strategic planning and resource allocation. These estimates help airports anticipate pressures on infrastructure, personnel, and systems, enabling targeted preparations and contingency development. Forecasting may be used to approximate:

- Air traffic demand
  - Arrival and departure curves
  - Commercial and GA traffic, including air taxis and helicopters
  - Parking requirements by aircraft type or service category
- Passenger arrival and departure demand
  - Passenger volumes by day or hour
  - International vs. domestic passenger ratios
  - VIPs, teams, delegations, and support staff
- Vehicle traffic demand
  - Commercial vehicles, taxis, rideshare, and media crews
  - Curbside utilization and impacts to connecting roadways
  - Private vehicle parking and capacity planning
  - Increased employee parking needs during extended or peak-hour shifts, as well as for temporary staff, contractors, and volunteers brought in to support the event
  - Dedicated or secured parking arrangements for dignitaries, VIPs, and motorcades

- Baggage system demand
  - Increased ratio of bags per passenger, compounded by increased passenger volume
  - Volume of oversized or specialty items
- Terminal concessions and services usage
- Staffing requirements across airport functions
- Equipment and resource needs

While forecasting is a valuable planning tool, airports must recognize its inherent limitations. Forecast data may not always be available far in advance, and in many cases, particularly on the GA and corporate aviation side, airports receive minimal data or receive it too late to influence planning. Operators of private and charter aircraft often do not share arrival schedules or parking requests until the final days before an event, making it difficult to finalize stand assignments or airfield configurations.

To manage this uncertainty, airports should prepare for a range of operational scenarios rather than rely on a single set of projections. Scenario-based planning using best-case, most-likely, and worst-case assumptions can help identify stress points and trigger thresholds for activating contingency measures. It also allows planners to maintain flexibility in stand allocation, staffing, and access control strategies, particularly for high-impact areas such as the FBO, apron, or security checkpoint queues.

Building adaptive capacity into plans and leveraging lessons learned from previous events can help compensate for forecasting gaps and ensure the airport remains resilient under dynamic conditions.

EVENT SCOPE FACTORS

One of the most significant considerations is whether an event draws mostly local attendees or visitors from outside the area. Events such as state fairs, home games, and local parades generally have minimal impact on airport operations because most participants do not rely on air travel. In contrast, events that attract out-of-town or international attendees (e.g., Kentucky Derby, Boston Marathon, FIFA World Cup) can significantly increase demand on passenger processing, security, and other airport operations.

Certain events also tend to attract highly mobile and dedicated fan bases. For example, college sports fans from schools such as the University of Tennessee and the University of Alabama travel more frequently and in greater numbers than other fan groups. Even when an event is regional in scope, the presence of these passenger types can significantly elevate airport traffic and resource needs.

Events with international appeal bring additional challenges as they often result in a higher percentage of international passengers who require US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) services. Close coordination with CBP supports efficient international passenger processing during major events. Ensuring adequate staffing and capacity helps reduce bottlenecks that can strain resources. The presence of more international passengers may also necessitate messaging in alternate languages to avoid confusion.

Political summits and global meetings, such as APEC or UNGA, can further complicate airport operations due to the presence of dignitaries and VIPs. These events may involve heightened security protocols, airspace restrictions, and coordination with federal agencies, often on very short notice. Airports must be prepared to adjust operations quickly and communicate effectively across agencies to maintain safety and minimize disruption.

Some sports teams have significant experience managing the logistical side of traveling with large groups and special equipment. These teams tend to have excellent communication with the airport and planning groups because they have the resources to manage the planning activities. Airports can plan for their arrival and make arrangements as necessary to ensure smooth operations.

However, some teams—particularly small international teams participating in world championships and Olympic Games—have limited logistical support and often less experience navigating the travel portion of the event. These teams can be challenging for airports because there is often little to no notice of their arrival. Establishing flexible, proactive coordination protocols for accommodating last-minute or low-resource team arrivals during major events ensures operational continuity and enhances the airport's ability to respond effectively to unscheduled or resource-constrained team arrivals. This effort can be supported by maintaining open lines of communication with event organizers, designating a liaison for unanticipated arrivals, and building contingency plans that include scalable staffing, expedited customs processing (for international arrivals), and adaptable space usage.

Planners should consider the behavioral impacts of some event types. Concerts, festivals, and sporting events often correlate with increased use of alcohol or illicit substances. This can result in elevated incidents of unruly behavior, medical emergencies, and the discovery of drugs at checkpoints or in public restrooms. To address these challenges, airports may need to increase staffing for law enforcement, medical response teams, janitorial services, and passenger support personnel. Proactive planning in this area is crucial to ensuring a safe and manageable post-event environment.

The month that the event is held in can significantly impact estimated traffic. Summer months, March/April (spring break), and November/December (winter holidays) already have increased traffic volumes, and major events will multiply the traffic. Additionally, months with significant weather events—such as snow, tornadoes, and thunderstorms—can increase the number of delayed and canceled flights. For example, the extreme winter weather in Dallas, Texas in February 2011 significantly decreased traffic expected for the Super Bowl.

Some events also generate a surge in private and charter aircraft activity. The Super Bowl and Kentucky Derby are well-known examples, with large numbers of private jets arriving and departing over a short timeframe. In these cases, airports may need to implement reservation systems for slots or parking and expand ramp space to accommodate the increased volume. Coordination with FBOs and GA services is key.

Special cargo considerations can also arise. Events such as the Indianapolis 500 and horse sales involve transporting high-value or sensitive cargo (e.g., race cars, horses, and related equipment). These shipments may require customs clearance, special handling, and special security protocols, depending on their nature and origin. Planning for cargo logistics should be integrated early in the operational timeline, especially if curb space for loading or unloading, or customs resources are limited.

Certain events, most notably presidential visits, may require all airside activity to cease temporarily. These events are usually coordinated in partnership with federal entities such as the Secret Service, but notice of the visit may be minimal, requiring flexible contingency plans and clear communication protocols to minimize disruption to scheduled flights and airport operations.

Some airports will need to also consider how neighboring airports may alleviate aircraft, passenger, and vehicle traffic related to the event. All commercial airports in proximity to the event location may see an increase in traffic, but overall event traffic may be split between the airports. For example, the three major San Francisco Bay Area airports are less than 50 miles apart from each other and often experience

increased traffic that has been divided between the airports. Similarly, Los Angeles International Airport serves as the primary gateway for major events in the Southern California region, absorbing most of the passenger traffic and reducing the burden on smaller neighboring airports.

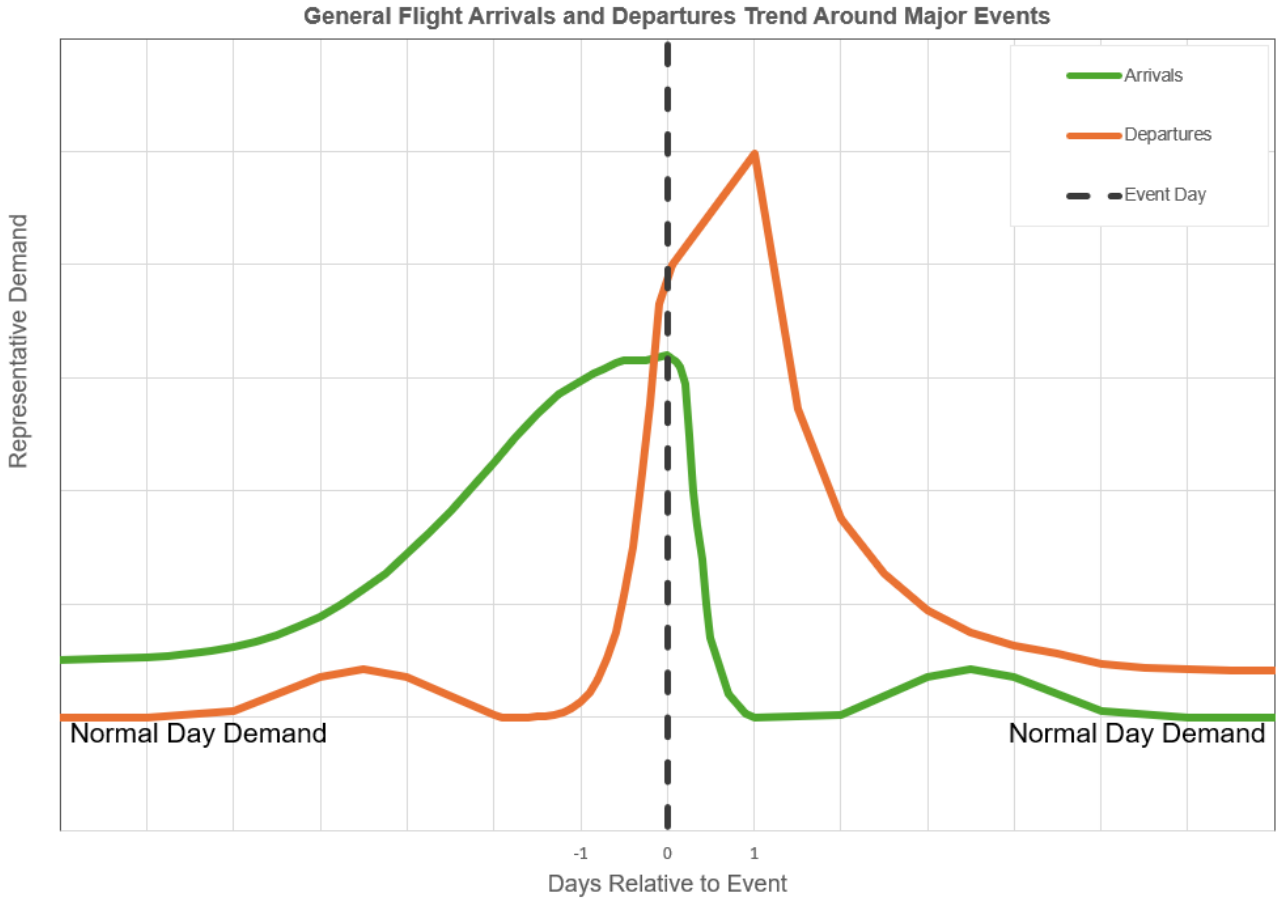
PASSENGER FLOW PATTERNS

Airports hosting major events should anticipate distinct spikes in passenger traffic tied to event timing. In the days leading up to the event (typically three to four days), flight and passenger arrivals gradually increase, with a surge typically occurring the day before the event as attendees, support staff, and VIPs arrive.

Departures, however, are far more concentrated, with most passengers opting to leave immediately after the event concludes, leading to a sharp peak in outbound traffic that may begin the night of the event and continue through the following day (AKA Departure Day).

Figure 1 illustrates the typical passenger flow curve associated with a one-day, locally hosted major event, showing the relatively gradual increase in arrivals before the event and the more concentrated departures immediately after. Airports hosting single-day sporting events can generally expect this pattern, with minor variations based on seasonality and day of the week. In contrast, multi-day events tend to have less predictable arrival patterns following the initial surge, though they still typically generate one or more distinct Departure Day peaks.

Figure 1. Typical Passenger Flow Patterns During Major Events



Passenger flow patterns can vary based on event type. For example, recurring events or those linked to local attractions may show an extended arrival or departure curve, as attendees extend their stay for sightseeing or arrive early to avoid crowds. Understanding these behavioral trends allows airports to better manage resource allocation, including checkpoint staffing, baggage handling, custodial services, and crowd-control measures.

Departure forecasts are typically easier to obtain, as TSA can provide estimates based on historical checkpoint screening data. In contrast, arrival forecasts are less centralized and often require direct coordination with individual airlines. Airports can proactively request this information from TSA and airline station managers or operations centers to support accurate planning.

Airports should also account for a secondary surge pattern sometimes observed during large, recurring events when local residents choose to leave the area during the event period to avoid congestion or to rent out their homes to attendees. This behavior results in elevated outbound traffic before the event and a corresponding return surge afterward, adding another layer of complexity to planning efforts.

Thorough understanding and forecasting of these passenger flow trends is essential to ensuring airport operations remain efficient, secure, and responsive to the demands of event-related travel.

DATA SOURCES

When assessing the potential impact of a major event on airport operations, the use of objective and quantifiable data significantly enhances the accuracy of forecasting and preparedness efforts. This data provides critical insights into patterns, resource demands, and operational pressure points that may arise during the event. By analyzing both historical and real-time data, airports can better anticipate surges in activity, allocate resources efficiently, and coordinate with stakeholders to ensure continuity of operations. Examples of useful event-related data include:

- Estimated number of event attendees to anticipate demand across all modes of transportation and airport services
- Daily and hourly aircraft operations, including both GA and commercial flights, to assess runway and apron usage, slot availability, and air traffic control (ATC) support needs
- Baggage and cargo operations to inform staffing and equipment requirements for ground handling teams
- Vehicular traffic volumes to support planning for road access, parking management, and curbside congestion mitigation
- Passenger throughput, including counts at checkpoints and boarding gates, to aid in determining staffing needs for the airport, airlines, and TSA
- Terminal services and concessions usage to offer insight into potential crowding, supply needs, and customer service demand
- CBP customs processing volumes to aid CBP in determining staffing and capacity needs
- Law enforcement, emergency, and security service calls to highlight trends in incidents or support needs for specific event types
- Overtime hours and volunteer staffing levels to quantify the human capital required to support the event
- Facility usage metrics, such as trash collection volume and restroom supply replenishment, to provide a sense of crowd density and dwell time in public spaces

- Aircraft fueling activity to estimate aircraft turnover and GA activity
- Visitor and temporary badge issuance and escort requests to indicate access control complexity and the potential need for alternative access strategies

Airlines may also respond to major events by adding limited-time service to and from high-demand markets. These added flights can significantly increase passenger volume and create additional stress on terminal and landside operations. Information about these schedule changes and projected passenger loads is often shared with the airport operations department in advance to allow for proactive adjustments in staffing, wayfinding, and security screening.

To effectively forecast and prepare for these operational impacts, airports rely on a variety of data sources depending on the nature of the event and the availability of information. These include:

- Flight reservation and tracking systems, with data provided by airlines, FBOs, or the FAA to understand projected flight activity and aircraft types
- Internal operational and financial tracking systems, which generate reports on historical and real-time metrics such as passenger processing volumes, terminal throughput, and concession sales
- Reports from previous events hosted at the same airport or in the same region that provide valuable lessons learned and benchmark data
- Event committee briefings that offer insight into expected attendance patterns, transportation arrangements, and special access needs
- Benchmarking with other airports, especially those that have hosted similar events, to understand what resource allocations and operational strategies were successful or insufficient

Analyzing these various data sources enables airports to develop targeted, evidence-based strategies that support safe, efficient, and customer-focused operations during major events.

3.3 Capacity Assessments

Capacity analyses are a critical component of event preparation for airports expecting substantial increases in passenger, vehicle, or aircraft activity related to locally hosted major events. Conducting these assessments early—or ideally before the formal planning process begins—gives the airport time to implement necessary operational adjustments or complete infrastructure improvement projects before the event occurs. These analyses not only help airports determine whether existing systems can accommodate projected demand but also provide a clearer understanding of the event's scale and the resources required to support it effectively. Three primary areas of airport operations benefit from capacity analyses during major events:

- **Landside operations**, including the impact of increased passenger drop-offs and pickups, hired vehicle activity (e.g., taxis, limousines, rideshares), and other vehicle types such as bicycles, motorcycles, recreational vehicles (RV), moving trucks, or shuttle buses. Rental car pickup and return areas should also be assessed for congestion, particularly where the exiting rental car vehicles merge with other exiting vehicles, and lot capacity constraints. These analyses inform how connecting roadways, terminal curbs, parking garages, and rental car centers may need to be managed or expanded.
- **Terminal operations**, including how passenger and baggage movements will affect arrival and departure areas, security checkpoints, gate rooms, baggage systems, restrooms, concessions, and other terminal services. This supports decisions on staffing, queuing, and amenities planning.

- **Airside operations**, including the projected number and types of commercial and GA aircraft, gate utilization, parking stand availability, and the expected volume of baggage and cargo. These analyses also support airside security planning, including escort needs and access control.

Insights from capacity analyses can also be used to justify construction or modernization projects needed to support anticipated demand. In many cases, airports have accelerated capital improvement projects in advance of high-profile events to accommodate the temporary but significant rise in operational requirements, and to ensure the airport reflects well on the host city during a time of increased media attention. For example, airports in Olympic Games host cities have expanded and adapted infrastructure to support elevated traffic volumes, including the addition of security checkpoints (Paris and London), upgrades to baggage handling systems (Paris and Los Angeles), construction of temporary buildings for overflow operations (Paris and London), and terminal capacity improvements (Los Angeles and Brisbane).

One interviewed airport described a series of construction projects already underway in preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. However, the airport was informed in late 2024 that it would also be hosting the smaller FIFA Club World Cup in the summer of 2025. Because the infrastructure improvements were not scheduled for completion until 2026, the airport needed to develop contingency plans and operational workarounds to accommodate the 2025 event amidst ongoing construction.

For airports that utilize standardized event planning templates, it is essential to review and update all reference materials—particularly maps, staging diagrams, and procedural plans—to reflect changes brought on by construction projects. Maps and planning documentation that rely on outdated layouts may misdirect stakeholders, delay security response, or compromise operational efficiency.

Emergency services must be briefed on any updated layouts, access routes, or restricted zones, especially if staging areas, emergency vehicle gates, or response paths have been relocated or altered. Incorporating temporary signage, pavement markings, and digital maps can improve wayfinding during the event and ensure that all stakeholders, including first responders, ground handlers, and support staff, can navigate the airport safely and efficiently.

3.4 Security Assessments

Performing security threat and risk assessments allows the airport to address vulnerabilities, anticipate threats, and implement robust countermeasures to safeguard the airport and travelers. Evaluating factors such as passenger flow, access control, crowd management, cyber threats, and emergency response capabilities can ensure that the airport functions safely and efficiently as a critical transportation hub for event attendees and participants. Effective assessments also account for security intelligence gathered around the event that may impact the event scope and planning.

3.4.1 National Special Security Events and Special Event Assessment Ratings

National Special Security Events (NSSE) are major events that are considered a potential target for terrorism or other criminal activity, as determined by DHS. These major events are considered to be a significant target due to a variety of factors, such as the expected attendance size and type (e.g., dignitaries), threat assessments, location, availability of state and local resources, etc.

For these events, federal agencies (typically FBI and Secret Service) take the lead in developing the operational security plan. While most of the federal effort is focused on security at the event location, it is not uncommon for airports to work with federal agencies to plan for VIP arrivals/departures and provide motorcade escorts for dignitaries. The security roles for the many federal agencies were defined in *Presidential Decision Directive 62* (1998) and the *Presidential Threat Protection Act of 2000* added special events as a responsibility for the Secret Service.

In the past decade, NSSEs have included UNGA, DNCs and RNCs, funerals of past US presidents, and APEC. The Electoral College vote count has recently been added to the list of NSSEs, and the 2028 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles will be designated an NSSE. This designation is not typically considered public information, and the designation is not always shared with the airport.

The Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR) system is used by DHS to assess the potential security risk of events, considering threat, vulnerability, and consequence. SEAR events do not rise to the same magnitude or security levels as NSSEs, but they have national or international significance and may require extensive federal interagency support and cooperation. A SEAR rating may be a result of past incidents, expected attendance, or proximity to controlled airspace.

Airports may have more federal assistance with SEAR-rated events, although this designation is not always shared with the airport. The DHS Office of Operations Coordination and Planning rates an event's security risks based on seven factors[5]:

- **Anticipated general attendance:** A large number of attendees or participants generally increases security requirements and attracts more attention from potential threats.
- **Anticipated dignitary attendance:** High-profile VIPs, such as US or foreign officials and heads of state, add risk and events with many dignitaries create a federal interest in ensuring the event is incident-free, with sufficient resources in place.
- **Significance of the event:** Events of great historical, political, cultural, religious, or other symbolic significance (e.g., national ceremonies, major international summits) can be elevated as targets and heighten concern for terrorism or criminal activity.
- **Venue site complexity:** Events spread across multiple locations or jurisdictions complicate security, requiring extensive coordination with the multiple law enforcement agencies and local governments involved. This may affect multiple airports.
- **Duration of the event:** Multi-day or prolonged events strain local resources and may exceed the capacity of local agencies that could otherwise manage a single-day event.
- **Location and vulnerability:** The geographic location can introduce specific vulnerabilities or threats; an event in a highly sensitive location or a known target area may face greater risk.
- **Availability of state/local resources:** If it is determined that state and local authorities lack sufficient expertise, resources, or equipment for a major event, that shortfall elevates the event's risk profile.

Based on the assessment, the event is assigned a SEAR rating 1–5:[6]

[5] *Planning and Managing Security for Major Special Events: Guidelines for Law Enforcement*, 2007
[6] TSA Management Directive No. 3300.5

SEAR 1: Events of significant national and/or international importance that may require extensive federal interagency security and incident management preparedness. *Examples: Boston Marathon, Super Bowl (depending on location), Mardi Gras, UNGA, most events designated NSSE*

SEAR 2: Significant events with national and/or international importance that may require direct federal support and situational awareness. *Examples: Super Bowl, Indianapolis 500, New Year's Eve in New York City*

SEAR 3: Events of national and/or international importance that require only limited direct federal support to augment local capabilities. *Examples: NBA All-Stars Weekend, Kentucky Derby, Formula 1 races*

SEAR 4: Events with limited national importance that are generally handled at the state and local level. *Examples: Major League Baseball games, Big Ten Football Championship*

SEAR 5: Events that may be nationally recognized but generally have state or local importance. *Examples: Minor League Baseball games, state fairs*

It should be noted that SEAR levels can change when necessary. For example, Mardi Gras was a SEAR 2 event that was elevated to SEAR 1 in 2025 after the New Year's Day attack on Bourbon Street.

TSA is required to provide security operations and interagency support for SEAR 1 and 2 events but typically does not participate with other federal agencies in SEAR 3, 4, or 5 events. TSA's assistance may include explosive detection canine (EDC) teams, cybersecurity risk assessments, venue screening, field intelligence teams, air security, and tactical operations support.

Homeland security officials and congressional members can submit an event to the DHS Office of Operations Coordination and Planning for SEAR assessment to receive federal assistance. Airports can collaborate with their local representatives to submit an event for SEAR assessment.

3.4.2 Threat and Risk

Implementing proactive, event-specific risk assessment practices strengthens airport readiness, enhances interdepartmental coordination, and provides greater assurance that the airport is prepared to support major events while maintaining its security posture.

While many airports rely on regularly scheduled assessments (e.g., quarterly or annual evaluations) to inform their overall security posture, those assessments may not fully capture the unique and dynamic risks introduced by large-scale, short-duration events. Incorporating a targeted risk assessment focused on the specific event factors (e.g., scale, attendee profile, operational impacts) can provide a more accurate understanding of potential vulnerabilities and resource needs. These assessments are most effective when led by airport law enforcement in coordination with airport security/operations, emergency management, and federal partners.

One interviewed airport reported that police leadership conduct pre-event walkthroughs of the impacted areas with key department stakeholders. During the walkthrough, the group participants assess site-specific vulnerabilities, identify operational changes, and evaluate staffing needs based on firsthand observations. When appropriate, federal partners also participate in these walkthroughs, especially for events involving high-profile individuals or requiring enhanced security protocols. Their involvement helps ensure that risk assessments consider federal security standards and coordination requirements. This direct field observation and

collaborative approach allows planners to identify issues in the field that are not obvious or identifiable through diagrams, maps, or planning exercises.

Walkthroughs are particularly critical in environments where construction projects are underway or recently completed. Ongoing construction can significantly alter access control points, perimeter integrity, or emergency response routes, which can create temporary vulnerabilities that may not be realized until physically assessed. Risk assessments that account for these conditions help identify necessary mitigation measures such as adjusted patrol routes, temporary barriers, or revised emergency access protocols before the event takes place. In some cases, corrective actions or interim controls may be needed to ensure that event-related operations can proceed safely and securely in areas still affected by construction activity.

Involving airport patrol officers who work at the airport daily and have deep knowledge of the airport layout, access portals, perimeter security, and operations in the early planning and risk assessment phases can provide valuable insights into vulnerable areas or past incidents in and around the airport. By engaging them in brainstorming and walkthroughs well before the event, management can identify potential security gaps that might otherwise be overlooked.

A risk assessment for a major event should include:

- **Event Description:** Type (political, festival), location and proximity to airport, DHS Special Events designation
- **Intelligence Summary:** Event, organizers, supporters and opposition groups
- **Participant Or Attendee Descriptions:** Age range, accessibility needs, dignitaries, arrival means (commercial or GA)
- **Building Details:** Barriers (temporary and permanent), access points, access control measures, security boundaries, and detailed building, roadway, and perimeter maps
- **Traffic Congestion Areas:** Pedestrian, aircraft, vehicle bottlenecks identified on maps
- **Emergency Access And Egress Locations:** Crash gates and emergency staging areas marked on maps
- **Access Control Posture:** Identification of required credentialing adjustments, gate staffing levels, access control restrictions, and entry protocols specific to the event period
- **Perimeter Security Considerations:** Fence-line reinforcement, signage placement, surveillance coverage, patrol needs, and potential high-risk breach locations
- **Special Equipment and Facility Requirements:** Temporary screening infrastructure, mobile command posts, lighting towers, water or power support for remote facilities, or hardened shelter spaces
- **Security Vulnerabilities and Threat Scenarios:** Analysis of critical failure points, high-risk times and locations, insider threat exposure, and external agitation risks
- **Secondary Events:** Protests/demonstrations and other known events scheduled simultaneously
- **Hazards:** Hazmat, weather conditions
- **Review of Previous, Similar Events:** AARs, benchmarking with other airports
- **Customer Services Available:** Facilities management, concessions, passenger assistance agents
- **Public Safety Services:** Emergency services partners and proximity, law enforcement partners and proximity, escort requirements

- **Waste Management:** Additional trash containers needed, trash removal services, and removal frequency

Incorporating discussions on risks and vulnerabilities during standing security meetings and event planning meetings can help elicit information from stakeholders about known issues or potential vulnerabilities that may be overlooked or go unreported.

ICS Form 215A: *Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis* is used to perform risk assessments, identify potential hazards, and outline mitigation measures:

3.4.3 Intelligence Gathering

Establishing strong relationships with local fusion centers greatly helps airport security and emergency planning personnel understand the potential scale and impact of events.

Fusion centers help track internet chatter, identify organizing efforts, and assess potential disruptions, allowing airport personnel to anticipate where, when, and how disruptions such as protests could impact airport security and operations. These centers also play a vital role in facilitating two-way communication between airports and regional law enforcement, ensuring that intelligence is timely and actionable.

Regional airport councils, the Airport Law Enforcement Agencies Network (ALEAN), Joint Terrorism Task Forces, and other multi-agency groups help airports stay informed about potential threats, protest activity, and other developing situations that may not be captured through local channels alone. Such collaboration is especially important for smaller airports, which may not have dedicated intelligence units or personnel to proactively analyze potential threats and conduct surveillance and monitoring activities. Leveraging these broader networks can significantly enhance situational awareness and allow smaller airports to respond more proactively to emerging security concerns.

Airports with unique geographic features or neighboring facilities may also benefit from targeted intelligence-sharing partnerships. For instance, airports with water along their perimeters can include the US Coast Guard or local maritime law enforcement agencies in their coordination efforts, particularly when a waterborne threat or protest activity is possible. Similarly, airports co-located with or adjacent to military installations can establish joint protocols for intelligence sharing, especially during high-security events such as presidential visits.

Some law enforcement agencies employ digital intelligence tools that monitor social media platforms for public posts indicating potential risks to the airport or its surroundings. These tools can provide an early warning mechanism for unpermitted protests or reliable threats, allowing for appropriate staffing, access control, and communications planning. By investing in strong intelligence-sharing relationships and integrating technology-based monitoring tools, airports can better prepare for potential threats and operational disruptions.

SECTION 4: EVENT COORDINATION PLANNING

Coordination planning tasks and activities are designed to prepare airport stakeholders to make more detailed and specific planning decisions. Early coordination planning efforts focus on identifying stakeholders, defining roles, and establishing coordination processes to guide event preparations. Capacity and risk assessments help scope the event's impacts on the airport and determine the level of resources, planning, and support needed for a successful event.

ICS Form 201: *Incident Briefing* captures key information about the event, such as the situation, resources assigned, and immediate priorities:

Appendix B includes a checklist that airports can use to help guide the coordination planning.

4.1 Stakeholder Engagement Approaches

Effective event management relies on meaningful community engagement and seamless communication. By fostering strong partnerships with event stakeholders, airports can better prepare for, respond to, and recover from irregular operations. Despite initially being developed for use in emergency situations, FEMA's Whole Community Approach and DHS's National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) are two strategies that can help strengthen coordination, build trust, and ensure that all stakeholders are informed, connected, and empowered before, during, and after a locally hosted major event.

4.1.1 FEMA's Whole Community Approach

FEMA developed the Whole Community Approach to increase each individual's situational awareness and enhance resiliency and security of the community. The concept was developed to involve local communities in all phases of disaster management, from prevention to recovery. The approach consists of three principles and six strategic themes to support the principles:

Principles:

- Understand and meet the needs of the community through community engagement
- Engage and empower the community by including diverse disciplines in the planning process and plan execution
- Build on and enhance successful strategies and practices already in place

Themes:

- Understand community complexity
- Recognize community capabilities and needs
- Foster relationships with community leaders
- Build and maintain partnerships
- Empower local action
- Leverage and strengthen social infrastructure, networks, and assets

For more information on the Whole Community Approach, FEMA has published *A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action* (FDOC 104-008-1).

Strategies highlighted in the document that airports can use to strengthen their community's security awareness during major events include:

Establish knowledge-specific working groups representative of the community.

Creating specialized working groups (e.g., event liaisons, first responders, cultural representatives) enhances situational awareness and provides targeted insight into potential vulnerabilities or threats that might not be visible through traditional law enforcement or airport security perspectives.

Engage the entire community to understand diverse perspectives and gain subject matter expertise.

Inclusive engagement helps identify unique security concerns from underserved or underrepresented stakeholder populations, which improves planning and helps mitigate blind spots that could be exploited during large-scale events.

Attend population-specific stakeholder meetings to hear their concerns.

Direct participation in stakeholder meetings and forums builds trust and allows airport personnel to anticipate concerns (e.g., crowd control, transportation access) before they escalate into security incidents during major events.

Share information with community leadership to establish trust.

Transparent communication with internal and external stakeholders fosters information sharing and early reporting of security concerns, which strengthens overall situational awareness and threat detection.

Collaborate with local emergency planning and management groups.

Coordination with local EOCs, law enforcement, fire/rescue, and public health officials ensures a unified response capability, minimizes confusion, and enhances the speed and effectiveness of joint operations during emergencies or disruptions to the event.

Use plain language and common terminology so all participants can understand.

Avoiding technical jargon or cryptic codes (e.g., "10-codes") ensures all event stakeholders can understand instructions, alerts, and safety procedures, which is critical for time-sensitive responses.

Formalize the community's role in the event and include in training and exercises.

Giving event stakeholders clearly defined roles and practicing them in planning exercises ensures faster mobilization and coordination during the actual event, while also reinforcing security awareness at a local level.

Disseminate messages through social media/digital platforms and community portals to reach a wider audience.

Using trusted, familiar platforms for public messaging increases the speed and reach of communications, which is vital for alerting large crowds during fast-developing situations. Use of internal airport communication portals allows real-time updates to be shared efficiently with airport personnel, enhancing situational awareness and coordination across departments during major events.

Develop recovery plans in partnership with the community.

Joint recovery planning helps coordinate resources and reduce post-event confusion and risk, especially in the case of events with unexpected disruptions or transitional recovery periods to prepare for a secondary event occurring soon after the first.

Incorporate event planning discussions into existing stakeholder meetings.

Incorporating event security planning into existing forums avoids duplication, fosters education and broader buy-in, and ensures that stakeholder perspectives are integrated into the strategy and are not an afterthought.

Identify barriers to community participation and provide solutions where possible.

Addressing communication challenges, such as scheduling or access to digital tools, ensures more equitable participation in security planning and reduces the likelihood of overlooked vulnerabilities during events.

Be available to answer questions and solicit input and feedback from the community.

Maintaining open lines of communication promotes transparency and can help de-escalate fears, clarify procedures, and uncover stakeholder-identified vulnerabilities before they become threats.

Supplement and augment community activities and resources rather than compete with them.

Supporting rather than duplicating stakeholder-led initiatives builds goodwill and resilience, allowing airports to serve as partners rather than as perceived outsiders or bottlenecks during major events.

Leverage existing programs to strengthen critical skills and training in the community.

Enhancing reporting and response programs, such as See Something, Say Something or This Is My Airport, creates a more informed and capable stakeholder population that can help identify and report security threats early.

4.1.2 National Emergency Communications Plan

DHS's NECP serves as the national framework for emergency communications.[7] The document provides risk management strategies and recommendations to mitigate disruptions to communications during an emergency, many of which can be used to support non-emergencies such as major local events. The plan provides seven objectives, which airports can model to support communications during major event execution:

1. Formalize decision-making structures and clearly define leadership roles.
2. Align communications programs and initiatives to achieve common goals.
3. Employ common planning and operational protocols.
4. Integrate current communications capabilities with new technology through implementation of standards, research and development, and testing and evaluation.
5. Use shared approaches to training and exercises, technology, and response capabilities.
6. Drive long-term advancements in communications through integrated strategic planning procedures, appropriate resource allocations, and mutual aid partnerships.

[7] **DHS NECP:** https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/national_emergency_communications_plan.pdf

7. Leverage integrated preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery capabilities to communicate during significant events.

The NECP's objectives offer a clear framework for developing resilient, interoperable, and coordinated communications systems that support both daily operations and high-demand event environments. Adopting these principles helps ensure that leadership, planning, technology, and response efforts are synchronized across all airport stakeholders.

4.2 Key Stakeholders

The stakeholders for major event planning and execution vary significantly based on the type and scale of event, but can be grouped into five broad categories:

- Internal airport departments, such as security, operations, emergency management, airport law enforcement, customer service, public and media relations, communications, engineering, facilities and maintenance, terminal management, airport business office, airport sponsor (e.g., Director, CEO)
- Tenants and service providers, such as airlines, concessions, FBOs, passenger assistance personnel, local hired vehicle and limousine (HVL) service companies, and contract security personnel
- Local stakeholders, such as local law enforcement agencies, emergency and hospital services, neighboring airports, and local government (e.g., mayor, governor)
- Federal agencies, such as TSA, FAA, FBI, DHS, Secret Service, CBP, and Capitol Police, as applicable
- Event leadership, such as event organization liaisons, political convention coordinators, and protest/demonstration leadership

Event planning committees are excellent sources of information on the event, and will be able to provide unique insights into the event, attendees, and potential operational concerns. They can provide more information on traffic types—such as increases in participants using mobility aids, oversized baggage, or box trucks used to transport large items or cargo—that airports can leverage to create or adjust operational plans for the event.

ICS Form 203: *Organization Assignment List* documents the Incident Command structure and personnel assigned to key roles.

The Super Bowl organizers send liaisons to live in the host city several months before the event to coordinate with the various event stakeholders; these liaisons are very experienced with the process and excellent resources for airports.

4.3 Event Committees

A foundational element of the planning stage involves establishing event committees and subcommittees. These groups are responsible for managing specific aspects of event preparation and assigning tasks to the appropriate roles or departments. Some of these committees may be formed by the airport itself to organize internal stakeholders and manage airport-specific planning needs. Others may

be formed by external event sponsors or local governments to coordinate region-wide event support, where airport participation is strongly recommended.

The committees are created based on the event needs to ensure the correct stakeholders are responsible for key functional areas of the event. During the planning process, these committees are expected to outline individual roles and responsibilities during planning and execution of the event, assign tasks to support the event planning, and ensure the tasks are completed by assigned timelines.

Community planning committees consisting of local government officials, event sponsors, local law enforcement agencies, local businesses, and citizens. Airport representatives may be included on these committees but not always; the airport's leadership (Director or CEO) or public relations would be the most likely representative.

Airport public relations committees consisting of customer service, public relations and media, communications, terminal management, and any other departments responsible for delivering messages to the public. This group is responsible for ensuring consistent and themed messaging, signage, and materials for the event. A representative from the event's planning committee may be included to assist and ensure consistency with event branding and messaging. Including the airport's designated PIO is essential to ensuring accurate communications with affected populations.

Terminal committees consisting of tenants located inside the terminal(s). These are often led by a terminal relations department such as customer service, concessions management, or terminal operations, and may include airline representatives, airline services providers, and capital programs. Discussions are often focused on promotional items, signage and messaging, food and beverage inventory, cleaning and trash disposal, minor facility modifications, staffing levels, and other terminal impacts.

Landside committees consisting of traffic management departments and tenants and stakeholders operating on the landside of the airport, such as rental car companies, parking services, engineering, tow truck companies, or HVL companies. Topics of focus for subcommittees in this group may include roadway lane configuration changes (short- or long-term), overflow parking, rental vehicle inventory, and vehicles for hire. Curbside congestion management and traffic management subcommittees may focus on access control along the roadways, traffic monitoring along the curbs, and loading/unloading staging areas for larger vehicles.

Airside operations committees consisting of airfield operations, airline representatives, tenant FBOs, cargo representatives, and occasionally FAA representatives and tower controllers. These committees allow for coordination of increased flight operations and discussions of operational strategies that may also have security implications.

Airport technology committees consisting of the airport's IT and potentially the security, operations, legal, engineering, and facilities departments. The technology committee is focused on cybersecurity threats, as well as implementation of technology solutions in preparation for the event to facilitate communications, monitoring, and situational awareness. The other departments are often tasked with assisting the IT department to implement the technology, as needed.

Law enforcement and security committees often consisting of airport and local law enforcement, airport security, the airport security coordinator, contract security, and federal law enforcement agencies. In some instances, these may be standing security groups that meet regularly throughout the year to

discuss security issues. SSI and other sensitive topics are more freely shared in this group to allow for detailed discussions of security concerns, measures, and approaches.

Airport stakeholder committees consisting of representatives of all airport stakeholders. This group may host standing meetings with the airport community to share updates. Given the large number of potential participants, the information shared during meetings is often high-level and generalized. Neighboring airport representatives may also attend this committee's meetings to keep informed of plans that may impact them.

Airports serving as primary transportation hubs for the event can proactively form internal planning committees aligned with key operational functions such as security, terminal management, airside operations, and public communications. Creating these committees early helps ensure internal coordination, clear task assignments, and identification of resource needs. In parallel, airports can also seek formal representation on external event sponsor committees or regional planning groups such as local organizing committees, municipal planning bodies, or event-specific coalitions to stay informed of citywide strategies and ensure airport interests are reflected in broader planning efforts.

Smaller airports with limited staffing may need to take a more streamlined approach. Rather than forming multiple distinct committees, a single cross-functional planning group can be established to address a range of topics such as security, terminal operations, public information, and airside logistics. Staff members may also serve on multiple committees or play dual roles, especially in departments where personnel have various responsibilities. The key is to ensure all critical functions are represented, even if the structure is lean. In these environments, clear documentation, centralized meeting notes, and strong internal communication can ensure coordinated event planning and execution.

Major events can require many committees and subcommittees to organize the numerous resources needed to execute the event plan. This process can lead to unintentional silos of information that can create miscommunication and confusion. For example, the Terminal Operations Committee may procure commemorative souvenirs that are considered a prohibited item (e.g., Little Slugger bats) because security was not consulted before the items were procured. Communication and information sharing should be a priority among the various committees. Establishing designated roles to serve as conduits of information with internal and external stakeholders will help to ensure effective communication channels.

Airport security, emergency management, capital programs, engineering, terminal management, operations, and law enforcement should request to participate in some of these committee meetings to contribute to security and operational planning, as well as solicit information from the committees that could impact security or operations during the event.

One interviewed airport reported that a Deconfliction Subcommittee was formed for a national political event specifically to look for conflicts in communication equipment, such as the radio systems, between multiple federal and local agencies. This helped ensure seamless communication and security operations during the event with hundreds of political VIPs.

4.4 Planning Schedule

The planning timeline varies greatly based on event type, whether the event recurs in the same city, and how often the event is held. Sports championships, festivals, and other events likely to have a significant

impact on the host city's economy are often planned far in advance. The following are some examples of revenue-generating events and planning timelines:

Event	Frequency	Repeat Hosts	Planning Horizon
Presidential Inauguration	4 years	Yes	3–5 months
Indianapolis 500	Annual	Yes	5–6 months
Kentucky Derby	Annual	Yes	12 months
Super Bowl	Annual	No	12 months
D/RNC	4 years	No	18–24 months
FIFA World Cup	4 years	No	24–36 months
The Olympic Games	4 years	No	48–72 months

While some pre-planning and preliminary meetings may begin more than a year in advance, it is common for many event-specific details—such as expected flight activity, passenger volumes, or private aircraft operations—to remain unknown until much closer to the event. Early efforts should focus on establishing planning frameworks, stakeholder coordination structures, and internal readiness assessments. As the event draws closer, more granular information will become available, allowing plans to be refined accordingly.

While the overall event timeline is often determined by external entities (e.g., event organizing committee, federal agencies, or host city officials), airports can begin pre-planning activities well before formal coordination begins. Once an event location is announced, or a local team qualifies for a high-profile competition, airports can begin preliminary assessments, internal coordination, and strategic discussions, even if few event details are known at that time.

Airports with experience supporting recurring events (e.g., Balloon Fiesta, Burning Man, Indianapolis 500) benefit from institutional knowledge and long-standing relationships with event organizers. These airports often operate on streamlined planning timelines, having refined their processes over many years. In contrast, airports supporting an event for the first time or those with smaller teams and limited resources may require a more extended and structured planning period to ensure readiness across all operational areas.

Security-sensitive visits, particularly those involving the US President or Vice President, present a unique challenge. These visits often provide airports with minimal advance notice—sometimes as little as 24 to 48 hours. Despite this short lead time, the airport must support multiple federal risk assessments and coordinate closely with the Secret Service, TSA, and other federal entities. Airports with prior experience hosting V/POTUS visits may maintain templated contingency plans or pre-established communication protocols that can be rapidly activated. However, newer or smaller airports may find it helpful to develop generic response templates in advance, even without a confirmed visit on the calendar.

For airports preparing for a major event for the first time, benchmarking with previously involved airports can be an invaluable source of knowledge to establish realistic expectations. These learning activities typically occur one to four years before the observing airport's turn to host, depending on the event's cycle. Benchmarking allows airports to gather best practices, assess common pitfalls, and adapt lessons learned to their own unique environment. More on benchmarking can be found in Section 3.1.

While institutional familiarity can shorten the formal planning process, it is important to remember that most events will includes staff who are participating for the first time. What is second nature to experienced airport personnel may not be intuitive for new employees, recently onboarded stakeholders, or personnel from other agencies unfamiliar with local procedures and the airport's operating environment. A robust, inclusive, and documented planning approach ensures all team members, regardless of experience, receive the information, tools, and support necessary to contribute effectively to event execution.

4.5 Meeting Frequency

The frequency of event planning meetings will typically increase as the event draws closer. Early planning meetings tend to focus on overviews and high-level discussions on the event, as well as introductions to committee members and key stakeholders. These early meetings with all stakeholders may take place quarterly or monthly. Individual committees and subcommittees may schedule additional meetings to discuss their specific topic area. Participation in early stages paves the way for more effective and efficient teamwork in later, more time-critical stages.

The frequency of the larger committee meetings typically increases to monthly or bi-weekly as the strategic planning becomes more focused on final preparations (see Figure 3). Subcommittees with more focused assignments meet more frequently (e.g., weekly) to discuss plan details, review progress, and assign tasks.

Figure 2. Typical Meeting Frequency

4.6 Stakeholder Communication and Coordination

Communication with all stakeholders is critical to ensure a well prepared and executed security plan for major events. Establishing communication channels, such as event committees or communication platforms, and regularly providing updates and sharing information at stakeholder meetings allow for stakeholders to report challenges and seek assistance before minor issues become major problems.

For information on sharing event security plans and information with the airport community, the following references are recommended:

PARAS 0003: Enhancing Communication & Collaboration Among Airport Stakeholders

PARAS 0044: Strategies for Aviation Security Stakeholder Information Sharing

PARAS 0049: Creating and Maintaining a Strong Security Culture at Airports

ACRP Report 153: Guidebook for IROPS Stakeholder Communication & Coordination

4.6.1 Reporting Channels

Robust reporting channels provide airports with a critical tool for maintaining security awareness, operational oversight, and situational responsiveness during locally hosted major events. While these systems are essential during daily operations, their value is heightened during high-traffic, high-risk events when security and safety concerns may emerge rapidly across the airport environment.

Promoting reporting channels before and during the event ensures that airport employees, contractors, tenants, and passengers know how to report suspicious activity, security concerns, or operational issues. Leveraging these reporting tools can help detect emerging threats early, accelerate response times, and provide valuable documentation for post-event analysis.

Using a variety of reporting technologies to support event security and operations monitoring provides flexible options for receiving and responding to information from diverse sources. Options may include:

- Phone numbers connecting callers to the airport operations, communication, or dispatch center
- Text messaging to share photos and videos
- Mobile reporting applications to share locations of incidents
- Email messaging to support non-urgent issues

To maximize the value of the reporting technology during a major event, airports can consider:

- Routing all reports through a central dispatch, communication center, or EOC for triage and response coordination
- Ensuring that security teams, LEOs, and operations staff monitoring the field are equipped with devices to receive updates from the reporting system
- Incorporating report data into real-time situational awareness displays in the EOC or Command Post
- Using the reporting systems to push situational updates or instructions to employees or event staff

Incorporating event-specific messaging into pre-event communications helps build awareness of available reporting channels in staff working at the airport and event passengers. Methods to promote the use of the reporting channels include:

- Updating airport staff, tenants, and contractors on reporting procedures during pre-event briefings or newsletters
- Including reporting information on event signage, digital displays, employee breakroom notices, and airport websites
- Coordinating with event organizers to push reporting instructions to participants, vendors, and attendees
- Reinforcing security awareness campaigns (e.g., DHS's See Something, Say Something, or the airport's proprietary awareness campaign) with messaging specific to the event's elevated security environment.

Clear, consistent messaging on the reporting channels' availability increases awareness and participation, normalizes reporting, and builds a collective security culture across airport users.

4.6.2 Contact Lists

Consistent communication is essential during locally hosted major events, particularly when unexpected incidents or contingency plans require rapid decision-making and implementation. Airports can maintain readiness by developing organized and accessible contact lists that support communication across all operational environments.

ICS Form 205A: *Communications List* documents key stakeholder contact information.

To ensure contact lists remain usable under a variety of conditions, airports may adopt multiple strategies to access the lists, such as:

- Storing digital copies on a shared network drive that is accessible to all key personnel
- Maintaining offline copies on local computers, USB drives, or secured mobile devices
- Printing hard copies for placement in EOCs, command posts, dispatch centers, and field kits
- Providing wallet-sized or laminated quick-reference cards for field personnel or supervisors

Maintaining these resources in multiple formats provides critical redundancy by ensuring that contact information remains available even during network outages, technology failures, or degraded communications. Regularly reviewing and updating contact lists during event planning is essential to verify accuracy and support seamless communication throughout the event life cycle.

Airports managing smaller-scale events or working without a formal command post may consider developing a notification decision tree. This resource can help event managers or on-duty staff quickly assess when to escalate an issue and who to contact based on the situation's severity or operational impact.

4.6.3 Collaboration and Communication Technology

Airports rely on advanced communication technologies to ensure seamless coordination among key operations stakeholders, including law enforcement, airfield operations, ground services, mutual aid partners, and event organizers. These technologies enable efficient information exchange and swift response to dynamic operational demands during a major event.

MOBILE COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Most airports rely on a combination of radios and mobile phones for real-time communication between stakeholders. These tools offer flexibility, familiarity, and wide availability, making them suitable for both routine operations and contingency use when more advanced systems fail.

Two-way radios remain the most common communication tool for airport personnel during events due to their durability, ease of use, and ability to function independently of cellular networks. For many airports, radios serve as the primary means of communication for operations, security, and field-based personnel. In other cases, radios function as a critical backup communication method if phone or web-based systems fail.

An inventory should be conducted of available radios well in advance of the event. This inventory can then be compared against the anticipated staffing levels and operational needs identified during event scoping to determine if additional radios must be procured, rented, or shared between teams.

ICS Form 217A: *Communications Resource Availability Worksheet* captures the inventory of all communication resources available for event.

To ensure reliable radio communication during the event:

- Test all radio equipment in advance to verify functionality and battery life
- Conduct coverage tests throughout the airport, especially in remote, infrequently used, or newly established areas to identify and address any signal dead zones
- Assign specific radio channels, including encrypted, to individual teams or functions to minimize cross-traffic and confusion, and to restrict communications to authorized personnel
- Designate a "common channel" for essential updates, emergency broadcasts, and coordination between separate teams or command posts
- Encourage use of plain language in alignment with the ICS, rather than codes, signals, or jargon

Mobile phones remain an indispensable communication tool during events, particularly for one-on-one coordination or non-radio users. Call logs and text messages can also serve as an informal record of decision-making, creating time-stamped communication logs that may be useful during post-event debriefs or timeline reconstruction.

Group texting or messaging applications provide an alternate method for sharing updates with multiple stakeholders at once. To avoid delays during the event:

- Establish group text threads or messaging groups in advance based on stakeholder roles or response functions
- Include both primary and secondary contacts for key roles to ensure redundancy
- Clarify expectations for how group texts will be used (e.g., operational updates only, emergency notifications, or general information sharing)

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone systems provide an additional communication option during events, particularly in environments where cellular networks may become overwhelmed by passenger traffic or media presence. However, because VoIP systems rely on internet connectivity, they are vulnerable to power outages or network disruptions. As with all communication systems, VoIP tools should be incorporated into layered communication planning, with clearly defined contingencies if either the internet or power fails.

To support effective use of mobile communication tools during major events, airports can:

- Build and maintain updated contact lists for all key stakeholders, including mobile numbers, radio call signs, and backup methods of contact
- Distribute communication plans to all teams in advance, including assigned radio channels, group text membership, and escalation protocols
- Test all communication equipment during pre-event exercises or operational walkthroughs
- Establish procedures for maintaining radio protocols and minimizing unnecessary chatter on shared channels
- Identify backup communication tools (e.g., landlines, satellite phones, or in-person runners) for use in worst-case scenarios

Proactive planning and layered communication strategies ensure that even during periods of congestion, disruption, or contingency operations, airport personnel can maintain clear, coordinated communication across all teams and response functions.

ICS Form 205: *Incident Radio Communications Plan* is the official communications plan for use during the event operational period.

CENTRALIZED COMMUNICATION HUBS

Centralized communication hubs—such as Teams, Slack, and Zoom—provide a single, organized platform for stakeholders to collaborate throughout the planning and execution of locally hosted major events. These systems support real-time communication and enable users to quickly share information such as images, videos, documents, and web links. In addition to messaging and group discussions, many platforms allow users to host conference calls, store event plans or airport SOPs, push live weather updates, and, if properly integrated, share CCTV footage or other security-relevant feeds.

Most systems require a per-user subscription. However, the enhanced coordination and situational awareness they offer often outweigh the cost, especially for complex, multi-agency events. To maximize utility, airports can establish and organize these communication hubs early in the event planning cycle, including:

- Creating user groups by function or agency (e.g., airport operations, law enforcement, event organizers)
- Uploading key planning documents for quick reference
- Setting permissions for sensitive content (e.g., surveillance footage or law enforcement–only threads)

Using the platform during normal operations helps ensure stakeholders are familiar with its features and can quickly access and share time-sensitive information. This familiarity also reduces confusion during emergencies or last-minute coordination needs. Deploying a centralized communication hub supports more agile decision-making, streamlined coordination, and greater situational awareness during high-pressure and fast-moving operational periods.

Airports seeking to procure such systems should begin by identifying operational requirements (e.g., user capacity, document sharing, access controls, mobile compatibility) and consulting with IT, legal, and procurement teams to evaluate available options. Coordination with mutual aid or local government partners may also uncover opportunities to align on a shared platform. Airports with limited resources may consider using existing internal tools with collaboration features or engaging regional emergency management agencies to access systems already in use.

VIRTUAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTERS

Virtual EOC platforms are increasingly used by airports and cities as a supplement or an alternative to traditional physical EOC activations. These platforms provide a centralized digital environment for real-time communication, document sharing, incident tracking, and situational awareness, enabling distributed teams to manage complex event operations from multiple locations.

Virtual EOCs are especially useful for coordinating across jurisdictions without requiring physical presence. By connecting through a shared platform, the airport and external stakeholders (e.g., city emergency management, police, public relations) can collaborate efficiently, reducing the need for

airport personnel to be physically stationed in off-site command centers. This capability also supports faster information flow and more responsive decision-making when time is critical.

When the airport and the local municipal government both use the same virtual EOC platform, the systems can be integrated to run in parallel. This allows each entity to view the other's operational dashboards, shared documents, surveillance footage, SOPs, and event status updates to support true joint coordination and eliminate information silos. This compatibility should be evaluated as part of any virtual EOC procurement or platform selection.

To ensure successful use, virtual EOCs must be incorporated into event planning well in advance. Strategies to ensure effective implementation include:

- Training internal and external stakeholders on system functionality
- Conducting system tests and exercises prior to the event to confirm access and permissions
- Performing live drills to validate connectivity and response workflows
- Designating a virtual EOC liaison responsible for monitoring and escalating issues in real time

PUSH COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Push communication tools such as public address (PA) systems, digital signage, and mass notification platforms allow airports to share timely and targeted information with passengers, staff, tenants, and event partners. These technologies support real-time messaging, event updates, wayfinding guidance, and emergency instructions to improve situational awareness across the airport environment.

PA systems remain one of the most common methods for airport-wide communication. These systems allow announcements to be made throughout the terminal or in designated zones (e.g., gate hold rooms, baggage claim). While useful for reaching broad audiences, PA messages are frequently overlooked by passengers due to ambient noise, announcement fatigue, sensory overload, or unclear audio. As such, they are most effective when paired with visual messaging or repeated through multiple channels.

Digital message boards such as flight information display systems, checkpoint information screens, or in-terminal advertising panels offer another method for sharing event-specific content. Passengers are more likely to notice dynamic visuals, but overuse of digital signage can lead to "sign blindness," where viewers tune out unfamiliar or repetitive content. For highest impact, messages should be concise, high-contrast, and tied to current passenger behavior or location.

Portable digital signage, including mobile LED screens or wheeled monitors, can be positioned in high-traffic or event-specific areas to deliver tailored information. These are particularly useful at overflow queues, remote gates, temporary security checkpoints, or VIP arrival points. Because setup and breakdown are often handled by facilities, maintenance, or IT teams, these departments should be included early in event planning to ensure availability and coordination.

Mass notification and emergency communication systems can deliver targeted messages to airport employees, contractors, and partners. These systems often support multiple modes of communication (e.g., text, voice, email, push notifications), and may include geofencing capabilities to deliver location-specific alerts. While email distribution is frequently used for event updates, it is an unreliable standalone method, as messages may go unopened or overlooked, especially in the midst of a high-demand operational period.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and geofencing technologies allow airports to deliver hyper-targeted messages to users within specific physical areas of the airport. By defining digital boundaries around terminals, checkpoints, baggage areas, curbside lanes, or temporary facilities, airports can send real-time notifications only to those devices located within the geofenced zone. This ensures messaging is relevant and reduces alert fatigue among recipients. Integrating GIS mapping with mass notification platforms allows the operations center to visualize where messages are being received and adjust communication strategies based on crowd flow and behavior.

No single push communication method is guaranteed to capture every audience. However, combining multiple tools and communication channels significantly increases the chance that the message will be received and understood. Strategies to effectively deploy push communication technology include:

- Using multiple platforms to reinforce key information
- Customizing messages based on location (e.g., checkpoint, baggage claim, curbside)
- Timing announcements to coincide with operational triggers (e.g., gate changes, surge periods)
- Assigning responsibility for message oversight to a designated communications lead within the operations or EOC team

Integrating push communication into the broader event communications strategy ensures the airport community remains informed, responsive, and aligned during dynamic or evolving conditions.

4.6.4 External Stakeholder Outreach

While airlines, law enforcement, tenants, and ground handlers are often involved early, other external partners—such as subcontractors, third-party vendors, hospitality providers, private ground transportation, and temporary support personnel—may be overlooked until they arrive on site. This can lead to confusion, access issues, or uncoordinated activity during critical operations, all of which negatively impact the airport's security posture.

To reduce disruptions and ensure a cohesive operational environment, airports should develop a communication strategy that deliberately targets peripheral stakeholders, including:

- Subcontracted maintenance or construction crews
- Private security firms hired by event organizers
- Third-party catering or media production vendors
- Out-of-region charter bus operators or hotel shuttles
- Event-specific entertainment, stage crews, or technology teams
- Volunteers or temporary staff hired by event partners

Outreach to these stakeholders may be more difficult because they are not directly in contact with or under supervision of the airport, but strategies include:

- Creating a targeted onboarding guide with essential airport rules, credentialing procedures, staging instructions, and contact information for distribution by stakeholder leads (e.g., tenant supervisors, contractor managers, department heads) to their respective frontline staff
- Providing permit and access instructions to prime contractors, and requiring distribution to all affiliated subcontractors and vendors

- Establishing a centralized information portal where third-party support staff can access requirements, event maps, and operational updates
- Conducting pre-event briefings or webinars for vendor and logistics coordinators to reinforce security expectations and logistical protocols

By extending planning communications to peripheral stakeholders, airports can reduce confusion, prevent security violations, and ensure all personnel supporting the event have requisite situational awareness and operate in alignment with airport policies, procedures, and requirements. This outreach supports smoother operations and strengthens overall event readiness.

SECTION 5: STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL PLANNING

The information gathered during the event scoping activities can be used to develop comprehensive strategic and tactical plans to prepare for increased vehicle, aircraft, and passenger traffic; terminal services demand; baggage system and security checkpoint demand; cargo operations; and recovery activities. Contingencies for every plan should be considered and documented as well. The developed plans will help determine staffing requirements, training needs, and any temporary adjustments to airport operations or facilities.

ICS Form 202: *Incident Objectives* outlines the overall objectives for the event and strategies for achieving them, including command priorities.

ICS Form 204: *Assignment List* details the specific assignments for operational units or teams.

ICS Form 215: *Operational Planning Worksheet* is used to develop resource assignments and plan operational strategies.

Appendix C includes a checklist to help airports track the planning process.

The following table provides a simple example that can be used to track, assign, and follow up on assignments and tasks during event planning.

Table 1. Assignment Tracking Example

Item	Task	Person(s) or Departments Responsible	Date Required	Date Completed	Comments
1.0					
1.1					
1.2					
2.0					

5.1 Temporary Operations and Facilities

Major events often place demands on airport operations that exceed the capacity of existing facilities, infrastructure, or operations. To maintain safe, efficient operations during these periods, airports may need to temporarily adjust operational changes or construct temporary buildings, equipment staging areas, or mobile command posts.

Temporary operations and facilities provide flexibility during periods of unusual demand. However, these solutions require careful coordination across airport departments to ensure they are safe, secure, and integrated into the broader event operations plan.

5.1.1 Changed Conditions, Temporary ASP Amendments, and Alternative Measures

Major events often require temporary changes to ASP procedures and measures, particularly when event logistics affect security regulated areas and necessitate updates to boundaries, access controls, escorting protocols, credentialing processes, and other relevant security measures. Changed Conditions, Temporary ASP Amendments, and Alternative Measures provide formal regulatory mechanisms that

airports can use to revise their ASP, ensuring compliance with TSA regulations while maintaining the operational flexibility needed to support a locally hosted major event. Each of these regulatory mechanisms includes specific TSA notification and approval requirements.

Early dialogue with the local TSA office during the planning phase allows airports to propose necessary security changes to the ASP and identify appropriate mitigations to support operational needs. Engaging TSA early in the process helps facilitate the approval of proposed security measures and ensures compliance with all applicable requirements.

CHANGED CONDITIONS

Changed Conditions are used to temporarily revise elements of the ASP when changes are expected to last fewer than 60 days, such as to security measures, training requirements, area descriptions, staffing, or air carrier operations (see 49 CFR § 1542.107). This timeframe typically covers the duration of most locally hosted major events.

Examples of temporary, event-specific changes that may require ASP adjustments under Changed Conditions include:

- Modifying regulated area boundaries, such as the airport perimeter, AOA, SIDA, or Secured Area, which may also involve changes to access controls
- Issuing temporary credentials to support event operations (also see Alternative Measures)
- Adjusting access control procedures for FBOs, remote parking areas, or other regulated locations affected by the event, such as designating these areas as AOA or public, with appropriate mitigations
- Making temporary staffing adjustments or modifying physical structures and operational procedures covered by the ASP

TEMPORARY ASP AMENDMENTS

ASP Amendments—often referred to as Temporary Amendments when related to special events—are used when changes to ASP measures are expected to remain in place for 60 days or longer. To initiate an Amendment, the airport operator must submit a formal request to TSA that outlines the specific changes to the ASP, the duration of those changes, and the mitigation measures proposed to maintain the required level of security (see 49 CFR § 1542.105). This request must be submitted to the designated TSA official at least 45 days prior to the proposed effective date of the amendment, unless a shorter notice period is approved by that official.

ALTERNATIVE MEASURES

Alternative Measures offer a flexible and proactive method for airports to comply with a TSA Security Directive (SD) while still meeting the airport's operational and security needs. This regulatory mechanism allows an airport to deviate from a specific requirement in an SD by implementing TSA-approved alternative procedures that sufficiently mitigate the associated risk. Unlike Changed Conditions and ASP Amendments, Alternative Measures require approval from TSA Headquarters. This mechanism is applicable only when a proposed change would otherwise conflict with an existing SD (see 49 CFR § 1542.303[d]).

Once approved, Alternative Measures become part of the airport's ASP, reducing the need to submit recurring Changed Conditions or ASP Amendments for similar future activities. The use of Alternative Measures for past events also builds institutional knowledge and strengthens coordination between airports and TSA by identifying effective risk mitigation practices.

When planning for an event, Alternative Measures can be particularly effective in supporting recurring or operationally dynamic activities that require flexibility beyond standard TSA directives. They may be especially useful for:

- Recurring activities or seasonal operations that require different security measures than those specified in an existing SD.
- Event-specific needs where Alternative Measures can be activated or deactivated as required, provided the airport complies with TSA's notice requirements and any conditions established during approval.
- Streamlining repeat procedures by pre-establishing specific protocols for issuing credentials. For example, airports may activate alternate perimeter access procedures during periods of high vehicle volume, protocols for issuing credentials to temporary duty (TDY) staff, or implementing temporary access controls. Once approved as an Alternative Measure, this procedure can be implemented without re-seeking TSA approval each time, provided TSA is notified in advance of the activation period.

This approach allows airports to maintain compliance while efficiently responding to the unique operational demands of large events.

TEMPORARY REVISIONS TO REGULATED AREA BOUNDARIES

To accommodate large-scale events, airports frequently revise the boundaries and features outlined in their ASP and submit these changes to TSA through the appropriate regulatory mechanisms. These temporary boundary adjustments are highly dependent on the airport's layout and the specific operational needs of the event.

In some cases, airports may request to temporarily relocate portions of the airfield perimeter fence or redefine regulated areas to exclude specific facilities—such as FBOs, hangars, or staging zones—from the secure area for the duration of the event. Airports may also reclassify portions of the SIDA or Secured Areas as AOA or non-TSA-regulated areas, provided they implement appropriate, event-specific security measures.

These strategic boundary modifications can streamline access control and credentialing procedures for VIPs, media, third-party vendors, and TDY staff. In doing so, they reduce the operational burden on credentialing offices, minimize escorting requirements, and help avoid the need to significantly increase staffing levels.

TEMPORARY CREDENTIALS AND TDY STAFFING FOR EVENT SUPPORT

Large-scale events often require airports to rapidly scale up their workforce by issuing temporary credentials or badges. These credentials support an influx of airline, FBO, and concessionaire personnel brought in from other locations to meet increased demand. To manage this, the airport may establish a special event badging process to grant TDY staff access to necessary restricted areas for the duration of the event, using specific measures approved by TSA.

Effective coordination with TSA is essential to expedite background checks and training. In many cases, TDY staff arrive several days prior to the event to complete a streamlined credentialing process. If the airport seeks an exemption from credentialing requirements outlined in SD 1542-08 (such as identity and work authorization procedures), an Alternative Measure can be requested through TSA Headquarters. These measures often include risk mitigation such as document verification by Trusted Agents upon the employee's arrival. Notably, airports may use both Changed Conditions and

Alternative Measures in tandem—for example, to modify regulated boundaries under Changed Conditions while simultaneously using Alternative Measures to meet SD requirements for issuing airport ID media. Limited-scope training may also be provided to ensure TDY staff are familiar with the areas in which they will work and to meet federal training standards.

In cases where events are led by the US Secret Service or involve other federal protective agencies, temporary credentials may also need to be issued to external law enforcement personnel, such as Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) units or state troopers. Identifying this requirement early allows the airport to include the additional background checks and badging processes in its planning timeline.

All temporary event badges should be configured to automatically expire at the conclusion of the event.

Super Bowl 50 (SB50) in 2016, hosted in Santa Clara, California, attracted more than 71,000 fans. Event planners anticipated the arrival and departure of nearly 1,100 private and corporate aircraft at the three major Bay Area airports—San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Oakland International Airport (OAK), and Mineta San Jose International Airport (SJC). These airports collaborated with a shared FBO tenant to determine the most effective strategy for managing the increase in aircraft and customers, and staffing demands. Planning efforts determined that the FBO would need to bring in temporary duty (TDY) employees from other locations to increase staff for the event; but with the fluctuation in operations throughout the day and week, the TDY staff needed the flexibility to move between the airports to assist in operations where most needed.

The airports decided to create a special badge for the event that would allow the badge holder to perform unescorted operations on the FBO AOA ramp at all three airports. The badge would not have the ability to open access portals secured with the airports' access control systems but would authorize the TDY staff to escort aircraft passengers, flight crews, unbadged service vendors, and ground transportation providers.

Appendix D provides more information on how this badging system was implemented.

SUPPORT MEASURES FOR TEMPORARY SECURITY MODIFICATIONS

The use of Changed Conditions, Temporary ASP Amendments, or Alternative Measures can be further supported by implementing specific access control and credentialing procedures (e.g., Stop Lists or Allow Lists) for individuals requiring access to secure areas during an event (e.g., TDY staff, airfield escorts, contracted drivers). These lists provide an additional layer of assurance that every person present in secure areas is expected, vetted, and authorized, thereby reducing the risk of unauthorized access.

Compiling these lists in advance allows the airport to cross-check names against watchlists (e.g., TSA No-Fly and Selectee lists) as part of the vetting process. Visitor pass systems, spreadsheets, and paper logs can also be used to track and record all non-permanent personnel onsite and their assigned locations. This data serves as the foundation for developing accurate and up-to-date Stop and Allow lists.

SELECTING THE APPROPRIATE REGULATORY MECHANISM

Airports must determine how to meet TSA regulations applicable to the major event while supporting operational flexibility. When evaluating which regulatory mechanism is most appropriate for a planned change, airports should conduct a structured analysis to identify the mechanism best suited to their operational environment and event requirements. Considerations include:

- Operational and security needs specific to the event
- Whether the change affects the ASP (e.g., security measures, area descriptions, boundaries, staffing, or escorting requirements)
- Whether the change deviates from a requirement in an SD
- Duration of the change
- Frequency or recurrence of the event or activity
- Whether the proposed mitigation demonstrates an equivalent level of security
- TSA notice and approval requirements

By leveraging the appropriate regulatory tools, airports can maintain compliance while executing event operations safely and effectively. Early coordination with TSA during the planning phase ensures that all changes are documented, approved, and ready for seamless implementation before and throughout the event.

5.1.2 Operating Hours

Airports may extend operating hours during locally hosted major events to accommodate the increased flights and passengers. To effectively implement this change, all essential services will also need to extend operating hours to ensure passenger facilities and staffing are available earlier and/or later than usual.

Opening the terminal earlier than normal on Departure Day allows passengers to arrive and check in to flights over a longer period, minimizing bottlenecks at curbs, ticket counters, and security checkpoints. By metering the passenger flow in this way, airlines and baggage handlers have more time to process each passenger and baggage. This is especially helpful for events expecting large groups traveling together or oversized or unusually shaped baggage.

Informing concessions, restaurants, and lounges of the extended hours allows them to adjust their operating hours, staff schedules, and inventories to serve the extended passenger presence.

Early and close coordination with local TSA leadership will be needed to open checkpoints early or keep them open later. This will also necessitate an adjustment to law enforcement staffing assignments to ensure the checkpoint is secured during the extended hours.

In some circumstances, the airport may open earlier than the check-in lobby or security screening checkpoints, which can lead to large numbers of passengers and baggage congregating in the public areas of the terminal, greatly increasing the risk of theft, disorderly conduct, and security incidents. In some cases, passengers may attempt to sleep on the floor, rearrange furniture, or block critical pathways while waiting, complicating terminal operations and creating safety hazards. To mitigate these risks, airports can implement several security-focused strategies:

- Deploy additional uniformed security personnel or LEOs in the public areas to deter criminal activity, enforce airport rules, and quickly respond to emerging issues.
- Establish temporary staging areas marked with stanchions or signage to maintain clear pathways, emergency exits, and operational zones.
- Limit access to certain areas of the terminal (e.g., upper levels, baggage claim) to minimize the footprint of waiting passengers.

- Use signage, PA announcements, and social media to clearly communicate terminal opening times, checkpoint operating hours, and any designated waiting areas.
- Increase monitoring of terminal CCTV feeds or use video analytics tools to detect crowd buildup, suspicious behavior and items, unattended items, or other anomalies in the public space.
- Coordinate closely with TSA to assess whether opening a limited number of checkpoint lanes early is feasible to relieve the congestion.

It is also imperative to extend ARFF and EMS operations to match the new operating hours, ensuring coverage for the first and last flights of the day.

In all cases, lengthening the operating day requires careful staff scheduling for all airport stakeholders—including adjusted shifts, postponed or canceled time off, overtime, and additional staff—to ensure full coverage during the expanded hours.

5.1.3 Operating Space

Airports may need to expand physical processing capacity to manage an event by deploying temporary facilities on the airfield or terminal property.

Opening additional TSA screening lanes or checkpoints for the entire Departure Day or during peak outbound traffic can greatly reduce surges and long queues. This can be a planned operation or reserved as a contingency plan to provide the airport with the flexibility to manage queues and crowds as they form. TSA can deploy additional screening staff or canine teams to support these lanes and checkpoints as needed.

In some cases, establishing remote screening sites away from the main terminal is more efficient to screen select passenger types. VIP charters such as sports teams or dignitaries can be screened at an FBO or remote hangar, keeping those groups separate from the public screening queues in the terminal. This effort requires close collaboration with TSA to implement effectively.

Similarly, if multiple international private or charter flights will be arriving, CBP can deploy a temporary remote Federal Inspection Services (FIS) station to process those passengers planeside or at an FBO rather than routing everyone through the main terminal. These remote or satellite operations relieve stress on central facilities but must be planned in coordination with TSA and CBP well in advance.

A US airport hosting a Formula 1 Grand Prix anticipated a large influx of fans from Mexico due to the participation of a popular Mexican driver. In preparation, airport operations and CBP established a supplemental FIS facility in a temporary structure. This adjunct facility provided extra immigration and customs screening lines to handle several additional flights from Mexico without excessive delays.

Analysis of data after the event showed a significant spike in arrivals from Mexico, validating the decision to expand capacity. The success of that temporary FIS led the airport to plan for a permanent expansion of its customs facilities to better handle future events.

In high airspace traffic scenarios, ATC can be temporarily augmented with a mobile control tower. Any such measure requires early coordination with the FAA and air traffic services, as well as training additional controllers as needed.

Moore County Airport (SOP) in North Carolina contracted a mobile ATC tower and staff to handle the surge of additional flights during the US Open Championship week. This ensured efficient sequencing of arrivals and departures despite record traffic levels.

A dedicated mobile operations center (often a trailer or outfitted vehicle) can be positioned strategically on the airport during the event to serve as a field command post for airport operations, security, and emergency responders. Satellite dispatch centers for airfield escorts, maintenance crews, or LEOs can reduce response times by placing decision makers and communications equipment on site. Equipping the units with radios, flight information displays, surveillance feeds, and backup power allows them to function independently and manage issues in real time without relying on the main operations center.

5.2 Public Area Security

During locally hosted major events, the public areas face significant operational and security pressures. Effectively managing these spaces ensures smooth passenger flow, operational continuity, and an enhanced security posture throughout the event period. Strategic planning, staffing, and targeted use of technology help airports maintain control, reduce risks, and improve passenger experiences in these heavily trafficked areas.

5.2.1 Terminal Entrances and Exits

During major events, airports often need enhanced measures to control and monitor passenger entry into terminal facilities. While often associated with protest activity, controlled entry can also be a useful tool for managing a variety of situations where large crowds could create operational or security concerns. These crowds can overwhelm terminal space, disrupt operations, or create an unruly atmosphere. Common examples of crowds that have the potential to create security concerns include:

- Rowdy or intoxicated sports fans
- Anticipated protests related to the event, social movements, or other external issues
- Large fan groups assembling to observe celebrities, athletes, or public figures
- Counter-protests in response to high-profile political conventions, dignitary visits, or conferences

One strategy is to direct all terminal users through controlled checkpoints at designated entry points. This approach maintains safe operations while preserving public access for legitimate airport users. It also ensures that security resources are focused at access points to enable early intervention for individuals who appear suspicious, disruptive, or who cannot demonstrate a valid need to enter the terminal.

To support this strategy, airports can identify in advance which terminal doors and access points can be closed temporarily to consolidate pedestrian flow. Remote locking mechanisms, manually securing doors, or deploying physical barriers may be used to prevent entry. Temporary signage will need to be deployed at the closed access doors, directing the individual to the next closest access door. Doors designated to remain open should be clearly marked for individuals rerouted from another door.

Once the checkpoints have been established, LEOs, contract security, and airport security can verify that those entering have a legitimate reason to be on the premises, typically via presentation of a same-day airline ticket, an airport-issued badge, or a vendor delivery manifest.

Minneapolis–St. Paul International Airport faced disruption in 2015 when a protest group rode the light rail from the Mall of America to the airport, blocking roads and attempting to enter the terminals on one of the busiest travel days of the year. Police responded by screening arriving passengers at the rail platform, turning away anyone without a legitimate reason to be at the airport, which helped contain the chaos.

Collaboration with the airport's fire marshal and life safety personnel is essential to ensure emergency exits remain available and compliant with fire codes during any controlled entry scenario.

Controlled entry plans should include procedures for clear communication during the heightened security operations. Clear, pre-scripted announcements over PA systems, dynamic signage guiding passengers to available entrances, and direct communication from stationed staff help maintain calm and order while ensuring compliance with life safety regulations.

5.2.2 Check-In Lobby

Locally hosted major events can flood an airport's check-in lobby with unusually high passenger volumes, particularly on Departure Day. Managing this surge in the ticketing and check-in area is critical for maintaining order and ensuring a positive passenger experience. Crowded lobbies increase security risks as dense crowds in open, public areas can become soft targets.

Airports can work with their airline tenants to offer remote or early check-in options to help spread the peak demands and reduce crowds in the check-in lobby. This could include check-in sites at the event hotel, convention center, or curbside counters. Opening the check-in counters early will encourage some passengers to arrive earlier to avoid the large crowds, smoothing the demand curve during the morning peak. When combined with remote bag drop options (see 5.2.3), these measures could greatly reduce queuing and wait times in the check-in lobby.

Airports can significantly bolster their check-in lobby operations during major events by leveraging technologies that increase check-in efficiency. Self-service kiosks shift a portion of the check-in workload from staffed counters to automated systems, accelerating the process and shortening queues. Encouraging passengers to use check-in kiosks and mobile airline check-in applications can significantly improve throughput. Airports may temporarily deploy additional mobile kiosks during the event to help meet demand.

Common-use check-in kiosks and counters allow the airport to reallocate space and equipment between airlines to help balance the demand surges. This provides a great amount of flexibility for airport managers to adjust the operations in the check-in lobby by dedicating select kiosks to airlines experiencing a surge in passengers. Note that some airlines may use technology that is incompatible with common-use kiosks (e.g., RFID bag tags).

Roving agents with tablet devices can be deployed to check in passengers while they wait in the queue. The tablet allows the agent to issue boarding passes electronically to people before they reach the counter, effectively pre-processing the queue and reducing per-passenger transaction times.

Some airlines are introducing biometrics and facial recognition to streamline and expedite identity verification by reducing or eliminating manual passport checks at the counter. This can significantly reduce congestion over the course of a busy travel day.

5.2.3 Bag Drop

Some events impact checked baggage more significantly than others. For example, professional athletes often bring oversized baggage and equipment, as well as more baggage than an average passenger. LHR reported that athletes departing the 2012 Olympic Games averaged more than three bags per person, far above a typical passenger baggage count. Such loads can quickly overwhelm baggage conveyor belts and require extra staffing to sort the baggage and equipment.

One interviewed airport described the movement of 1,500–2,000 freshly graduated Army troops in a two-day period around Christmas Day every year. The troops are bused to the airport the night before their flight and then wait in the public areas of the airport for the security checkpoints to open.

The troops often carry baggage that is irregular in shape and exceeds 100 pounds, placing significant strain on the airport's legacy baggage system. Having the troops arrive the night before their flight allows the airport to process the baggage incrementally, reducing the risk of overwhelming the system and potential failures.

Special bag drop-off strategies can be used to manage the increased baggage load. One highly effective approach is establishing remote bag drop sites away from the terminal. Airports can coordinate with event organizers and airlines to establish remote bag-drop locations at the event hotel, convention center, or sports stadium where passengers can tag and check their bags before arriving at the airport.

Those bags are then transported in bulk to the airport, either by truck or special shuttles, and routed through screening during off-peak periods. This way, the airport's baggage system receives a steadier flow of luggage that can be metered, rather than a large surge during peak hours.

Both London and Paris airports used off-airport bag checks for the Olympics (2012 and 2024, respectively). The airports collected thousands of bags from athletes the night before their departure, which allowed the bags to be screened and sorted in advance of Departure Day.

Establishing remote bag drops in airport parking garages or curbside can provide a similar benefit on a smaller scale. A portion of the passengers who would normally contribute to the crowding in the public areas are able to complete a significant step in the check-in process outside of the terminal, easing congestion inside.

Inside the terminal, airports can create efficiency at bag drops by ensuring there are staff (airline or volunteers) to assist passengers with automated bag-drop machines. If needed, an area of the bag drop can be separated specifically for people who have completed check-in and only need to drop off bags. This expedites shorter transactions to quickly push passengers through the process.

Event scoping activities should have identified the expectation for unusually shaped or oversized baggage and equipment. Major events often require participants to transport large objects that may not fit on the baggage conveyors, and may require manual baggage handling and additional moving equipment (carts, dollies) to deal with efficiently. For some events, it may be beneficial to temporarily operate an oversized baggage checkpoint to move those transactions out of the main processing queue.

Communicating with passengers about baggage expectations can greatly assist the airport with planning efforts. Knowing that each convention delegate is permitted to bring a limited number of bags or a sports team is expected to arrive with a large piece of equipment can help the airport anticipate the number of baggage handlers needed to ensure efficient operations. Encouraging event attendees to arrive earlier if

checking bags or to consider shipping items instead of checking them can also help reduce the load. The airport may be able to coordinate with on-site courier services to support attendees shipping items.

5.2.4 Crowd Control and Queue Management

Wait times significantly influence passengers' perception of airport efficiency and security effectiveness. Effective queue management not only improves passenger satisfaction but also moves passengers more quickly through the various processes, reducing congestion and crowds in the public areas.

The psychological principles of waiting have been well-documented and can be summarized in the following eight factors:

- **Occupied time feels shorter than unoccupied time:** Passengers find idle waiting frustrating, especially when there are long lines and crowds. Providing visual distractions such as monitors displaying flight updates, event information, public announcements, engaging digital messaging, rotating art displays, or animated characters can capture passenger attention while they wait and help break up the monotony of the queue. Some airports have incorporated design elements borrowed from amusement parks—such as mirrors, themed decor, or artistic features along the queue route—to distract passengers as they wait.
- **People want to get started:** Clearly defined queues with visible signage and barriers reassure passengers that they have joined the queue and will not lose their spot. This reduces confusion and stress, facilitating orderly crowd behavior and enhancing overall lobby security.
- **Anxiety increases perceived wait times:** Large crowds without clear direction or instruction heighten passenger anxiety about missing flights or joining the wrong queue. Clearly marking queues with physical barriers, floor decals, and directional signage helps passengers quickly confirm their position in the queue, minimizing uncertainty.
- **Known waits feel shorter than uncertain waits:** Providing accurate, regularly updated wait-time estimates at check-in counters and kiosks significantly decreases passenger anxiety. Digital signage displaying expected wait times allows passengers to gauge progress, manage expectations, and plan their next steps with confidence.
- **Explained waits feel shorter than unexplained waits:** Transparent communication about delays such as computer issues, increased security procedures, or staffing shortages helps passengers understand and accept longer wait times. Passengers are more likely to respond positively to transparent communication that demonstrates professionalism and compassion, even when their plans are impacted. Sharing even limited details about technical issues or operational disruptions helps reframe the situation from one of neglect to one of active problem-solving. Providing accurate information about the nature of the delay allows passengers to make informed decisions (e.g., when to contact their ride or use terminal services), reducing anxiety and frustration. Regular updates from visible airport or airline staff can further reduce frustration and maintain crowd calmness.
- **Fair waits feel shorter than unfair waits:** Queue structure plays a major role in perceived fairness and efficiency. Serpentine queues are preferred in many airport settings for their ability to segment the wait into shorter, more manageable sections that can be extended as needed. They also maximize space efficiency and allow passengers to see the line progressing, which reinforces the sense of forward movement.

When long queues are expected, implementing organized, single-queue systems feeding multiple check-in stations ensures passengers are served in the order of arrival. Clearly marking queue entries and monitoring line integrity prevents queue-jumping, reducing passenger frustration and potential confrontations.

- **Passengers tolerate longer waits for essential services:** Passengers generally accept longer wait times for necessary procedures such as check-in and security screening. However, patience decreases rapidly when waits seem unnecessary or inefficient. Clearly differentiating essential queues (check-in, security screening) from optional ones (customer service desks, retail queues) helps passengers prioritize their time appropriately.
- **Group waits feel shorter than solo waits:** Passengers traveling in groups experience waits as less burdensome due to social interaction (occupied time feels shorter than unoccupied time). Encouraging passengers to remain with their travel groups and designing queues wide enough to comfortably accommodate families or groups traveling together can make waits more tolerable.

By strategically applying these principles to crowd control strategies, airports can effectively manage both passenger perceptions of waiting and the overall security and operational efficiency of the check-in lobby during the increased passenger traffic. A combination of transparent communication, psychological cues, and physical queue layout can significantly improve the passenger experience and reduce the likelihood of disruptive behavior.

While a single-entry queue may feel more fair to waiting passengers, it can create a chokepoint during high demand periods and lead to longer overall waits. An alternative option is to open multiple parallel queues for each check-in agent or kiosk and allow individuals or groups to choose among them. This can reduce congestion at a single point and spread demand more evenly across the available service areas. While some passengers may end up in a slower-moving queue, this system helps maintain a steady flow and avoids the buildup of one massive queue. Choosing which queue to join also gives passengers a sense of control, which can help reduce feelings of helplessness and irritation.

The strategic positioning of staff at key chokepoints—such as the lobby entrance, kiosks, or at the start of the check-in line—can greatly aid crowd control. Such personnel can:

- Temporarily prevent new passengers from joining the queue until congestion eases
- Redirect passengers to different queues or kiosks based on their ticket status
- Enforce queue discipline to keep pathways, exit lanes, and fire exits clear
- Monitor developing congestion hotspots
- Answer wayfinding questions

To maintain order and improve efficiency in high-traffic areas such as check-in and kiosk zones, airports can implement structured queuing strategies to manage crowds and minimize confusion during peak demand, including:

- Deploying physical barriers (e.g., retractable belt stanchions) to create structured queuing areas in front of ticketing counters and self-service kiosks
- Extending existing barrier systems during peak periods to accommodate additional passengers and prevent uncontrolled crowd formation
- Clearly defining queue boundaries to prevent clustering, reduce confusion, and maintain orderly flow

- Posting clear signage to guide passengers and indicate queue entry points, directions, and available services
- Regularly monitoring queue behavior and adjusting barrier layout in real time to respond to surges or shifting passenger patterns

Dynamic queue strategies can help improve the efficiency of moving passengers on to the next process. This can include creating a separate queue for specific passenger groups, such as passengers with disabilities who participated in para-sporting events or a large entourage of sports team players and officials, who may need extra time to check in for their flight. The special lane allows the passenger to be processed at a slower pace without interfering with other passenger types that can be processed faster. If the main queue starts to become too long, an "express" lane can be opened for passengers without bags or in danger of missing their flight. Announcements can be made over the PA system or by queue attendants walking the area.

Proactively opening checkpoint queueing lanes earlier than standard operating hours during forecasted periods of high volume can effectively reduce crowding and long queues. Once lines begin to grow, mitigation options become less effective due to the pace and scale of arriving passengers. Coordinating with TSA to open lanes before crowds grow can ease crowding and reduce wait times before they escalate.

CROWD AND QUEUE MONITORING TECHNOLOGY

Managing large crowds in the lobby and security checkpoint in real time is a complex task. Many airports have deployed crowd and queue monitoring technologies to support airport operations teams in managing queue lengths and passenger flow. Leveraging these technologies during major events can greatly improve responsiveness to surges in passenger volume.

Passenger flow management systems are able to continuously measure how many people are in queue and how fast the line is moving. These systems use tools such as overhead laser sensors, stereoscopic cameras, or Wi-Fi/Bluetooth signal tracking to gauge queue metrics. The data feeds into live dashboards in the airport's operations center, showing performance indicators such as current wait times, the number of people in queue, and throughput rates (passengers screened per minute). Surveillance cameras focused on queues allow operations to visually confirm what the data is showing. If sensors indicate a slowdown, a quick camera check may reveal the cause. This combination of quantitative data and visual feed enables a more nuanced understanding of the situation.

Advanced queue monitoring systems can be configured to send alerts when certain conditions are met. For example, the system can be configured to automatically notify airport duty managers via text or an alert on their computer when:

- Unusual crowd density is detected in a normally empty area
- Queue length exceeds a set threshold or extends beyond a defined point
- Throughput drops below a certain rate or a queue has very slow movement

By receiving automatic alerts on these conditions, airport staff can manage other tasks and rely on the system to notify personnel when attention is needed. Once alerted to a growing queue or crowding issue, airport management can enact contingency plans in real time.

Advanced queue management systems can integrate directly with digital signage, dynamically updating passenger guidance based on live queue conditions. The live wait data from queue monitoring can

update the feed on digital signage, mobile applications, or airport websites so passengers can check airline check-in and security line conditions. Airports may also coordinate with event organizers to add messaging about extended wait times on event mobile applications or public announcements.

VIRTUAL QUEUES

Some airports have started exploring the use of virtual queue systems at passenger security checkpoints to reduce congestion and improve the passenger experience during peak travel periods. With virtual queues, passengers can reserve a spot in the security queue digitally via a mobile application, a dedicated webpage, or a kiosk. Instead of physically standing in queue, passengers receive a digital reservation (often with a QR code or confirmation number), and may spend the waiting period relaxing, shopping, or dining elsewhere in the public area of the terminal. Passengers are notified by the system via text message, application notification, or terminal screens when it is their turn to proceed through the security checkpoint.

While virtual queues are still an emerging practice, they have shown promise at several airports and could be especially useful for managing Departure Day rush. Airports considering this approach should ensure that the reservation system is easy to use; is well-publicized to event attendees through the event organizer, airlines, and airport communications; and has clear instructions on where and when passengers need to report. Backup options should also be in place for those who miss their slot or arrive late.

5.2.5 Baggage Claim

The baggage claim area experiences the heaviest traffic in the three to four days leading up to the event when the majority of attendees arrive. Effective management of the baggage claim area and carousels during events is essential for both security and customer service.

One major concern is the risk of baggage theft or mix-ups in a very crowded claim area. When multiple event flights arrive around the same time, the carousels could be loaded with suitcases and equipment an opportunistic thief might find appealing, and the crowds make it easy to blend in.

Because baggage claim is typically located in a public area of the terminal, it is also possible for a bad actor to leverage the high volumes of luggage and dense foot traffic as cover to cause harm. Increased security patrols in the baggage claim area during peak arrival times can help deter this activity. Plainclothes LEOs can observe and spot suspicious behavior, while uniformed officers will deter theft by their visibility. If the resources are available, canine teams can be deployed in the area to heighten situational awareness and provide visible deterrence.

Video analytics tools integrated with baggage claim surveillance systems can further support detection efforts. These technologies can alert operators to unattended baggage, overcrowding, or escalating behavior between passengers, allowing a rapid security response.

Event volunteers and ambassadors can also be stationed in the baggage claim area to support crowd navigation, direct passengers to the correct carousel, answer questions, and help identify any unusual activity. This visible support presence improves both passenger experience and overall situational awareness.

Temporary operational adjustments can be made to help alleviate the congestion at the baggage carousels. Passengers can be encouraged to only send one representative per traveling group to the carousel to collect bags. Announcements can be made in the area to inform passengers of changes to

carousel delivery or causes of delay. Volunteers and ambassadors can be deployed to share this information and manage the crowd's expectations.

Airports can also assign carousels using a different strategy than those used for normal operations to capitalize on the number of available carousels for the arriving flights. This may involve assigning one flight per carousel (instead of two per carousel) to allow more room for the passengers to spread out.

Logistically, the quicker bags are delivered to the carousel, the sooner passengers can vacate the baggage claim and terminal. Where possible, airports can increase staffing for baggage handling teams to assist with baggage movement and delivery.

Many events bring in large baggage and equipment that will not fit through the regular carousels. These items are delivered to passengers through special large doors near the baggage claim area that typically lead directly to the secure baggage handling area. If the oversized baggage doors must be opened frequently to deliver large bags and, these portals can become a vulnerability by providing an opportunity for a passenger or bad actor to access the SIDA/Secured area without authorization. To address this, airports can post a LEO or security personnel at the oversized bag door when it is in use.

5.2.6 Rental Car Counters

Rental car counters located in high-traffic public areas of the terminal can present operational vulnerabilities and affect public area situational awareness if they become congested during major events. Proactive coordination and layered security measures help mitigate risks and support efficient operations.

Strategies to help prevent unnecessary crowding, reduce potential conflict at the rental car counters, and support consistent oversight of passengers within the terminal include:

- **Enhancing security visibility:** Position roving security patrols or customer service ambassadors near rental counters during peak periods to manage queues and disperse crowds. Their presence also deters disruptive behavior and reinforces the perception of order.
- **Deploying surveillance coverage:** Ensure CCTV cameras cover rental counter queues and surrounding areas to monitor activity and assist with incident response. Confirm camera angles are unobstructed by signage or temporary displays.
- **Managing queue flow:** Use physical queue barriers to prevent crowd clustering and ensure queues do not block walkways, exits, or access to other services (e.g., baggage carousels, escalators). Assign airport staff to assist with queue flow during peak arrival periods, if needed.
- **Supporting communication readiness:** Ensure rental car personnel understand the airport's reporting protocols and have a reliable means of contacting airport operations or law enforcement. Consider equipping counters with panic buttons or clearly posted emergency contact instructions.
- **Restricting behind-counter access:** Access to storage areas or shared workspaces behind rental counters should be restricted to authorized personnel and secured with access control measures (e.g., badge reader, cipher lock). This is particularly important if rental counters are adjacent to baggage systems or maintenance corridors.
- **Coordinating with off-airport rental providers:** Establish procedures for curbside coordination and vehicle staging for off-airport rental car companies providing pickup service.

- **Protecting sensitive information:** Encourage rental car companies to limit visual access to screens or documents and supply secure disposal methods for expired forms (e.g., shredders, locked bins).
- **Securing key drop boxes:** Ensure rental car key drop boxes are tamper-resistant, clearly labeled, and placed in well-monitored locations with adequate lighting and camera coverage. Regularly inspect these boxes to prevent misuse, tampering, or the concealment of prohibited items.

Integrating rental car partners into the airport's operational briefings and event communications ensures alignment and responsiveness during surge periods.

PARAS 0050: *Public Safety and Security at On-Airport Rental Car Facilities* offers airports strategies and approaches to enhancing the security of rental car counters and facilities.

5.2.7 Security Staffing in Public Areas

During major events, airports typically increase law enforcement and security staffing throughout all public-facing areas of the terminal. Public areas include terminal curbs and entrances, check-in lobbies, baggage claim areas, arrivals hall, and circulation areas accessible before the security checkpoint. A highly visible security presence both inside and outside the terminal serves as a deterrent to criminal or disruptive behavior, and enables faster response times to calls for service. Combining visible patrols with discreet observation, advanced surveillance technology, and real-time communication provides a layered and flexible security posture that can adapt to changing conditions throughout a major event.

Developing an effective security plan for the public areas of the terminal starts with assessing staffing needs and identifying critical areas most likely to experience pressure. Once these areas are mapped, the airport can deploy law enforcement and security resources strategically and determine where outside agency support might be required to fill gaps or provide specialized capabilities.

Most airports begin ramping up security staffing three to four days before the event, aligning with the initial surge of arriving participants and attendees. This increase in foot traffic raises the potential for issues such as theft (e.g., stolen luggage), unattended property, passenger disputes, or crowd management challenges.

Once the airport has identified the minimum staffing required to execute the event's security plans, it is common practice to increase that number by at least ten percent. This buffer helps ensure coverage for unanticipated security or operational issues, as well as unexpected staff absences.

Airports often rely on overtime shifts for LEOs, contract security, and airport security and operations staff during special events. Overtime may be mandatory or voluntary depending on the size of the event, available staffing, and local labor agreements.

Once the public area security plan is developed, LEOs may need special training sessions for each team to become familiar with their post or patrol and any specific tasks or rules of engagement for that assignment. It will also benefit the command officers to know the event schedule and peak travel times during their shift to help them anticipate crowds and schedule breaks. With thorough training and preparation, LEOs will be able to act more decisively and in unison during the event.

All officers, from the command staff down to front-line patrol, should be well versed in their specific event duties, the overall security plan, potential threats, vulnerabilities, and mitigation measures. This

ensures everyone is working toward the same mission and reduces confusion when the terminal is crowded. Early coordination with outside agencies is vital to ensure external officers assisting with the event are familiar with the airport environment. Many officers from city or county forces may never have patrolled an airport before, so including external LEOs in pre-event training can help bridge the knowledge gap for these personnel assigned to a major event. Airport familiarization briefings or guided tours for outside support officers can help orient them before they begin their assignment for the event.

FIELD SECURITY PERSONNEL AND PLAINCLOTHES OBSERVATION

Uniformed officers and security personnel provide both a deterrent effect and a direct point of contact for passengers needing assistance. Strategically stationing these officers in key public-facing areas—including curbside drop-off, terminal entrances, check-in lobbies, bag drop counters, and baggage claim—maximizes visibility and reduces response times.

Roving patrols, whether on foot or using low-speed mobility devices such as bikes or electric transporters such as trikes or Segways, enhance coverage of high-traffic zones and allow officers to navigate crowded spaces more easily. Many airport police departments equip officers with body-worn cameras to provide a time-stamped, audio-enabled record of their interactions and incident responses.

Plainclothes officers add another layer of security by blending into crowds, monitoring for suspicious activity, and observing the general mood or behavior of passengers. This discreet observation role allows them to identify agitators or threats who might behave differently around uniformed officers.

Maintaining clear, reliable communication among all security staff (e.g., uniformed, plainclothes, and centralized monitoring teams) is essential to avoid confusion or duplicated responses. All field personnel should maintain regular contact with the airport operations center or security command post using established protocols for reporting suspicious activity, requesting backup, or escalating situations.

COLLABORATION WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

During major events, outside law enforcement agencies can be assigned to support public area security, which minimizes their need for secure area access. Responsibilities should be clearly divided between those requiring law enforcement oversight and those that can be managed by airport, airline, or volunteer personnel.

Primary responsibilities for external law enforcement agencies may include:

- Responding to calls for service in public areas
- Monitoring large gatherings near terminal entrances (e.g., protests or demonstrations)
- Conducting high-visibility uniformed patrols in key public-facing areas, including ticketing, baggage claim, terminal curbs, and rental car centers
- Supporting crowd control in response to dynamic security threats or incidents

Duties that can be managed by airport and airline personnel or volunteers, with law enforcement support if needed, include:

- Queue management and control in terminal lobbies
- General crowd assistance and passenger movement coordination
- Staffing curbside drop-off and pick-up zones
- Providing wayfinding or basic customer assistance services

Pairing outside officers with badged airport LEOs to conduct patrols could allow support officers to patrol Sterile Areas without needing to go through the airport badging process. In rare cases where external officers must work alone in secure areas, planning should time constraints for badging, training, and secure area familiarization to ensure the officers can patrol the secure zones unescorted.

In some cases, specialized units (e.g., SWAT or canine teams) may be brought in from outside agencies to perform more advanced tasks, such as dignitary protection. Their advanced training and equipment exceed that of regular patrol officers, and having specialized units on standby can address high-risk scenarios if needed. Depending on the airport's available resources and partnering agreements, external law enforcement support in the public areas of the terminal may include:

- **SWAT:** Highly trained tactical units ideal for dignitary protection or rapid response to a serious security incident.
- **EDC Teams:** Canine units are extremely useful for quickly sweeping large areas or high volumes of people and baggage. They require setup time and rest breaks for the dogs, but once deployed they can greatly speed up screening activities. Additional EDC teams (local and federal) deployed at airports during major events can greatly support and augment local capabilities.
- **TSA Federal Air Marshals:** In coordination with TSA, some Air Marshals can be temporarily reassigned to patrol the public areas of the airport terminal (in or out of uniform) during the event. Their surveillance and plainclothes expertise can help identify suspicious behavior in crowds.
- **Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) Teams:** These TSA-led teams (typically visibly armed) can perform random security sweeps in the airport terminal to deter hostile activity during events with heightened threat profiles.
- **Specialized Investigative Support:** Agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) may station agents at the airport during an event to monitor for signs of drug trafficking through baggage systems. Joint task forces can also be leveraged for human trafficking detection; local and federal officers collaborate to identify potential trafficking victims or perpetrators moving through the airport.
- **Traffic Control Units:** Responsible for managing the surge of vehicles along the roadway and curbs. Highway patrol or local traffic enforcement units can assist with directing vehicles, enforcing no-parking rules at curbs, and clearing bottlenecks.

When planning for major events, the deployment of federal law enforcement assets needs to be carefully considered, as their jurisdiction is limited to federal offenses. Unlike local or state law enforcement, federal officers may not have the authority to detain or arrest individuals for violations of state or municipal laws, such as disorderly conduct, trespassing, or traffic violations. As a result, they may be unable to act independently in many common event-related incidents. To avoid response gaps or legal conflicts, the airport can clearly define the roles of federal partners, coordinate closely with local law enforcement, and ensure that all responding agencies understand their jurisdictional boundaries and operational responsibilities.

All these resources act as force multipliers for the airport's security. By strategically working with a network of support resources, the airport creates multiple layers of security.

PARAS 0042: *Force Multiplier Strategies for Airport Law Enforcement* provides strategies for extending law enforcement capabilities with outside or non-law enforcement resources.

PARAS 0055: *Airport Law Enforcement Staffing* offers guidance to help airports determine how many officers are needed under various demand scenarios. Airports hosting major events can consult the included tools to determine the number of resources needed to support event demand.

EVENT AMBASSADORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Event ambassadors and volunteers are a practical way to enhance customer service and crowd management during major events without overextending airport operations or security personnel. These roles focus on helping passengers navigate the airport and answering common questions, allowing trained security staff to concentrate on safety and incident response. The use of volunteers is especially helpful given that locally hosted major events are typically short term, and it is often impractical to hire and train temporary employees for the few days they are needed.

The primary responsibilities of the event volunteers and ambassadors are assisting passengers and managing crowds. They act as friendly guides and problem solvers in the terminals by answering questions about the event or the city; giving directions to gates, baggage claim, restrooms, etc.; and assisting with airport processes. Volunteers also help keep an eye on queues and can gently redirect passengers who may be in the wrong place (e.g., intercepting passengers before they open alarmed doors).

Event volunteers are typically drawn from the local community (e.g., civic groups, students, retired airport employees) or from the airport's staff willing to volunteer on their days off. Non-badged volunteers must be restricted to public areas or be escorted if they need to enter the Sterile Area.

Airport ambassadors, conversely, are usually paid customer service staff who already work at the airport terminals giving directions and answering questions. During the event, the airport can increase the number of ambassadors or approve overtime to support the additional effort. Airports may badge some ambassadors so that they can work on the Sterile side of the terminal as well as the public side.

Soliciting event volunteers and ambassadors from the airport's workforce provides a knowledgeable and often badged group to assist during the event. Personnel not assigned to key event operations roles, such as certain administrative staff, can support GA operations requiring airfield access or assist in understaffed areas within the airport.

During the Formula 1 US Grand Prix in 2012, Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS) temporarily reassigned staff from Planning and Human Resources to assist Operations during the event. These staff already knew the airport well, had appropriate clearance, and were extremely useful in roles such as gate management, VIP handling, and overseeing remote parking areas.

Pre-event briefings are critical to set customer service expectations and review airport-specific information such as terminal layouts, event schedules, and safety protocols. Basic crowd management training supports the security team's efforts to mitigate congestion; volunteers can be instructed to politely interrupt groups gathering and guide passengers to their next processing point.

Volunteers using radios, tablets, or other tools such as translation devices will also require basic equipment training.

Special event attire or visual cues (e.g., t-shirts, vests, lanyards) can make volunteers easier to identify in crowds and create a unified and professional appearance.

The Team Heathrow volunteer program for the 2012 London Olympics recruited 1,000 community volunteers who wore bright pink shirts to stand out in the crowds. These volunteers greeted athletes and VIPs, helped spectators find their way, and generated enthusiasm for the event in passengers. On the busiest Olympic travel days, 300–350 volunteers were on duty throughout LHR terminals, providing massive support to the airport's customer service and crowd management capabilities.

Volunteer staff planning should account for the influx of event passengers arriving *and* departing. Keeping volunteers on duty through Departure Day can greatly assist with the surge in departing passengers by managing queues and reminding passengers to pack event-specific items that could trigger the screening equipment in checked baggage. They can also significantly assist with the airport's transition to normal operations by collecting and packing up any temporary event signage, brochures, or decorations remaining in the terminals.

In terms of management, a coordinator or team leader will need to be appointed to schedule shifts, ensure everyone gets breaks and meals, and serve as the point of contact if a volunteer encounters an issue.

PARTNERING AGREEMENTS

To support the expanded security operations during locally hosted major events, airports often rely on partnerships with local, regional, and federal agencies. Airports may work with city police, county sheriff's department, state highway patrol, transit police, on-site military base resources, and occasionally federal agencies (e.g., TSA, CBP, FBI, DHS, Secret Service), which may be able to contribute resources during NSSEs or SEAR-rated events or under partnering agreements.

Mutual aid agreements and other partnering arrangements offer airports a formal pathway to request additional personnel, equipment, or specialized resources from partner agencies. Many airports already maintain mutual aid agreements for emergency response scenarios, such as aircraft accidents or natural disasters. Adapting or temporarily expanding these existing agreements may provide operational support during a major event.

To be effective, these agreements should be reviewed and activated early in the planning process, allowing partner agencies sufficient time to coordinate internally, confirm resource availability, and orient personnel. It is important to recognize that many local agencies may already be stretched thin supporting event-related activities throughout the city, which could limit the resources they are able to contribute to the airport. Early coordination ensures clarity around roles, expectations, and capacity.

Additionally, local government officials, event organizers, or airport leadership may have made informal commitments of airport resources early in the event planning process, including bus staging areas, VIP accommodations, or private aircraft parking. Airport operations, security, and public safety teams play a key role in translating these commitments into safe, workable plans or identifying alternate solutions when certain requests are not feasible by collaborating with event organizers and local partners to:

- Confirm the details of any commitments involving airport facilities or operations
- Assess operational or security considerations associated with those requests
- Identify any additional coordination, approvals, or resources that may be required
- Integrate these commitments into the broader event security and operations plan

Early communication and collaboration reduces the potential for last-minute confusion and ensures a coordinated approach across all stakeholders.

5.3 Monitoring and Surveillance Technology

Technology plays an increasingly important role in helping airports monitor activity in and around the terminal during major events. Advanced tools such as video analytics and facial recognition can act as force multipliers for security teams, allowing staff to monitor large, complex spaces more efficiently and identify potential threats faster.

Facial recognition systems use security cameras to scan crowds for individuals of interest by comparing facial features against watchlists or law enforcement databases. These systems can generate alerts in real time, allowing security teams to quickly locate and respond to persons of interest such as wanted criminals, banned individuals, or missing persons.

While only a limited number of US airports have fully deployed facial recognition for general surveillance, its use is expanding in targeted applications, such as during special events or high-security operations. Community acceptance, privacy concerns, and cost remain barriers to widespread adoption, but for short-term event operations airports may be able to temporarily enable facial recognition in specific high-risk areas or for dignitary protection, provided privacy policies and legal requirements are met.

Video analytics is a more commonly used tool that can often be added to many existing CCTV systems. This technology can be used to monitor camera feeds and automatically flag suspicious or unusual behavior, such as:

- Unattended baggage or items in a public area
- Individuals attempting to enter through the exit lane
- Large crowds forming
- Loitering or abnormal movement patterns

This reduces the burden on human staff, allowing security personnel to focus on verification and response rather than passive monitoring of dozens (or hundreds) of camera feeds.

When used together, technologies such as video analytics, facial recognition, and license plate readers (LPR) provide powerful situational awareness. Integration allows these technologies to track an individual from the moment they arrive on airport property through the main roadway, parking facilities, and terminal spaces. Integrated systems can be used after an incident to reconstruct a person's movements and interactions across multiple areas and camera views.

Despite their capabilities, these technologies have limitations and must be governed by clear policies to ensure privacy protections and responsible use. False positives remain a common issue; for this reason, all automated alerts need to be reviewed and verified by human staff before action is taken.

If airports expand the use of video monitoring technologies during major events, some jurisdictions require public notification. Posting temporary signage informing passengers that enhanced surveillance is in effect may also serve as a deterrent to criminal behavior.

5.4 Signage, Wayfinding, and Messaging

Effective signage, wayfinding, and targeted messaging are essential tools for managing high volumes of passengers, event participants, and media during major events. Thoughtfully designed and deployed communications guide passengers through altered pathways, reinforce security expectations, communicate critical operational changes, and help establish a sense of order amid the increased activity. Messaging also sets the tone for the event, contributing to a smooth experience and projecting a well-organized, welcoming atmosphere.

Typically, the airport's public communications or marketing team takes the lead on designing signage and messaging campaigns. However, success hinges on collaboration with operations, ground transportation, facilities, customer service, and security teams. These stakeholders provide critical input on areas of operational change (e.g., checkpoint adjustments, altered curbside layouts, construction detours, staging zones, pedestrian reroutes) that must be accurately and clearly reflected in messaging.

To maximize effectiveness, messaging strategies should:

- Be coordinated across all channels, including PA announcements, static signage, digital boards, mobile alerts, and social media to ensure consistency and reach
- Use plain language and universally understood symbols to minimize language barriers and prevent misinterpretation, especially for international passengers
- Emphasize key instructions early in the passenger journey—such as altered entrances, wait times, or restricted zones—to reduce bottlenecks and security incidents
- Include visual cues such as arrows, color-coding, or floor decals to reinforce physical flow and minimize the need for verbal assistance from staff

5.4.1 Signage

Clear signage and effective wayfinding become essential when airports experience an influx of event participants or attendees who may be unfamiliar with the terminal or infrequent passengers. If these passengers struggle to find their way to important processes in the public area, or if they get confused about where queues begin, small pauses near the checkpoint can quickly compound into large crowds or choke points. Effective signage and wayfinding ensure passengers move steadily and safely to and through the passenger screening checkpoints.

- **Visibility:** Place signage where it can be seen above crowds. Overhead signs, large banners, or digital monitors mounted high on walls or ceilings are ideal. Floor markings can be helpful for catching the eye of those looking at their phones. However, floor signs can be obscured once a crowd forms and should always be paired with elevated signs.
- **Repetition:** Place signs at all critical junctures and airport processes to help reinforce the message.

Reusable signage is a practical investment for airports that frequently host the same or similar events. Signs made from durable materials (e.g., aluminum, high-quality plastic) can withstand repeated handling and outdoor exposure. Using interchangeable panels, magnetic overlays, or Velcro-backed inserts allows teams to easily update event names, dates, sponsors, or directional arrows without recreating entire signage packages. This modular approach not only saves money but also supports quick deployment during compressed planning timelines.

Early planning and coordination also allow for signs to be installed methodically rather than reactively. Signage placement should be reviewed through the lens of passenger flow modeling and security oversight to ensure that signs support crowd management goals and avoid creating blind spots or security vulnerabilities.

5.4.2 Language Considerations

Language accessibility is a critical component of event communications when hosting large numbers of international attendees. Ensuring that signage, announcements, and informational materials are understood by non-English speakers is essential for maintaining safe, orderly operations and a positive passenger experience.

To support this goal, a demographic analysis can be conducted early in the planning process to identify the nationalities and preferred languages of expected event attendees. This data can be gathered from the event organizer, tourism agencies, or past event records, and should inform the prioritization of languages for translation.

Airports can use multiple strategies to support multilingual communication, including:

- **Multilingual signage and printed materials:** Key directional signage, safety messages, and event-specific instructions (e.g., altered entrances, staging areas, shuttle instructions) should be translated into the most commonly spoken languages among anticipated visitors. Visual icons and color-coded cues can supplement translations to support universal understanding.
- **Readable design elements:** Signage should use high-contrast color combinations and readable font styles sized appropriately for the viewing distance and terminal environment. Clear, visually accessible designs help ensure that messages are noticed and understood by a broader range of passengers, including those with limited vision or unfamiliarity with the language.
- **Digital messaging and screens:** Many digital systems used in terminals and common areas can rotate through multiple languages or display context-specific instructions in real time. These platforms are ideal for promoting last-minute updates or directing traffic flow.
- **PA announcements:** For announcements expected to affect large groups (e.g., gate changes, crowd control), pre-recorded or live translations may be needed in priority languages. These should be prepared in advance and coordinated with the event PIO or communication team for distribution.
- **On-site language support:** For particularly complex events or when a significant number of attendees are expected from one non-English-speaking region, human interpreters or on-demand interpretation services (via handheld radios or mobile applications) may be necessary. These individuals or services can support:
    - Security screening interactions
    - Wayfinding and crowd control
    - Customs and immigration processing
    - VIP and media escort coordination
- **Mobile language access tools:** Airports can also consider quick-response (QR) codes or mobile application integrations that link to translated resources, emergency instructions, or help-desk chatbots available in multiple languages.

Proactively planning for language access reduces passenger confusion, lowers the risk of noncompliance at CBP or security checkpoints, and improves the airport's ability to maintain flow and order as people arrive for and depart from the event. It also demonstrates cultural awareness and hospitality, reinforcing the airport's reputation as an international gateway.

5.4.3 Event Theming

Aligning airport messaging with the event's branding enhances visibility, reinforces consistency, and improves passenger engagement. By incorporating recognizable logos, fonts, color schemes, taglines, and thematic imagery into signage and announcements, airports can create a cohesive visual experience that aligns with attendee expectations and draws attention to critical information. Event-branded communication offers several advantages:

- **Improved message recognition and retention:** Branded signage stands out from routine airport visuals, helping passengers quickly identify which messages pertain to the event. Familiar colors, fonts, and logos increase recall and reduce the likelihood that important instructions are overlooked.
- **Enhanced wayfinding:** When signage related to an event is visually distinct, it becomes easier for passengers, especially those unfamiliar with the airport, to follow instructions, navigate temporary routing changes, or locate event-specific amenities. This is especially helpful for directing passengers to security checkpoints, media zones, or shuttle pickups.
- **Stronger public perception:** Integrating event branding into airport messaging signals that the airport is an engaged and organized partner in the event, projecting professionalism and reinforcing the airport's role in welcoming and supporting attendees. It contributes to a positive first and last impression for out-of-town visitors.
- **Cross-platform consistency:** Branded messaging can be extended beyond physical signage to include digital screens, PA announcements, social media posts, mobile alerts, and printed materials. This reinforces the event identity across multiple communication channels and helps unify instructions delivered to event attendees through different sources.

Before using official event logos, taglines, or branded materials, airports should confirm whether the content is trademarked or otherwise protected under copyright. Many event sponsors, particularly those representing large-scale or televised events such as the Super Bowl or FIFA World Cup, may impose strict limitations on third-party use of their branding. Airports should consult with their legal team and obtain formal approval from the event organizer or rights-holder before incorporating event-specific marks into signage, announcements, or promotional materials. Aligning with the event theme is possible without direct logo use by adopting the event's general aesthetic or referencing the theme in more neutral terms. See Figure 3 as an example of event theming without use of copyright or trademarked materials.

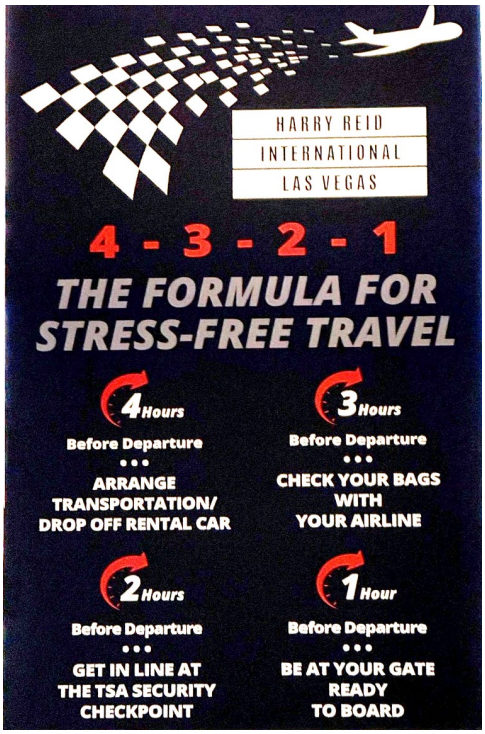
For a Formula 1 event, Harry Reid International Airport (LAS) adapted its traditional departure countdown signage by incorporating checkered flags and speedometer graphics, aligning the look and tone with the racing theme while maintaining the core travel messaging found at many US airports.

To effectively implement branded messaging, airports can:

- Coordinate early with the event organizer to obtain permission to use official design elements (logos, fonts, colors, usage guidelines).
- Establish internal design templates for signage and communications that incorporate the event branding in a consistent, professional manner.
- Limit overuse of branded materials to avoid visual clutter; branded assets should highlight critical information or directions, not overwhelm the terminal environment.
- Ensure contrast and accessibility remain intact; event branding must not compromise visibility or readability, especially for passengers with vision impairments or limited English proficiency.

Branded communication is a strategic tool to enhance message clarity and ensure attendees feel informed and supported from the moment they arrive.

Figure 3. LAS Formula 1 Signage



5.4.4 Webpages and Social Media

Airports can significantly enhance outreach and preparedness by leveraging airport websites and social media accounts to deliver timely, event-specific messaging. These tools enable rapid communication with diverse audiences and serve as a central hub for distributing updates, instructions, and resources before, during, and after a locally hosted major event.

Creating a dedicated event webpage will provide a reliable, always-accessible source of information for attendees. This page should consolidate essential information such as:

- Security procedures and TSA reminders (e.g., event souvenirs that are prohibited in carry-ons)
- Ground transportation details and curbside changes
- Parking availability, costs, and shuttle options
- Terminal maps and amenity highlights
- Airline-specific advisories or flight impacts
- Hours of operation for key airport services

Linking this content across partner websites helps drive traffic to the airport's messaging and ensures consistency across public-facing platforms.

Social media platforms provide a powerful complement to the event webpage by offering fast, flexible, and highly visible updates. These tools are particularly effective for:

- Alerting passengers to last-minute changes or disruptions
- Sharing visual content such as wayfinding maps, signage previews, or video walkthroughs

- Promoting early arrival recommendations, road closures, or gate changes
- Reinforcing safety and security messages with clear, engaging language

To increase the impact of social media messaging, prioritize visually engaging content, such as:

- Branded alert templates for event-specific updates
- Infographics summarizing procedures or rules
- Images of directional signage or construction zones
- Animated walkthroughs of terminal changes or event day logistics

Preparing pre-scripted posts and graphic templates in advance for anticipated scenarios allows the social media teams to remain ready to respond in real time as conditions evolve.

For events expecting an influx of GA and charter operations, digital messaging should also include operational guidance for pilots and flight planners. This may include:

- CBP and customs hours and procedures
- Reservation slot information for ramp space
- Any Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) in effect
- Parking limitations and FBO contact details

Posting this content on a designated GA page or a pilots' section of the event site and cross-promoting through aviation networks, Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) briefings, and pilot association newsletters ensures critical airside audiences are well informed.

The airport PIO plays a central role in managing communications during a major event. To ensure clarity and avoid conflicting information, the airport PIO should proactively coordinate with the PIOs of external organizations (e.g., event hosts, tourism boards) and partner agencies (e.g., airlines, law enforcement, emergency management, transportation agencies). This coordination allows for alignment of messaging released to the public, especially on sensitive topics such as security measures, protest activity, public access restrictions, or emergency incidents.

Establishing a joint communication strategy ensures that all stakeholders are delivering consistent and timely information to the public, reducing confusion and maintaining public trust. In fast-moving situations, such as delays, diversions, or crowd disruptions, aligned messaging can prevent rumors, correct misinformation, and demonstrate unified situational control. Interagency communication alignment also supports media relations by reducing contradictory statements and ensuring that reporters receive accurate, verified updates.

Coordinated digital messaging reduces the burden on front-line airport staff during high traffic events and builds public confidence, reinforces transparency, and helps all users navigate the event with greater ease and security.

5.5 Security Checkpoints and Screening Activities

Effective security screening is crucial during major events, as heightened passenger volumes and unconventional items can challenge airport procedures. Well-coordinated preparation and collaboration between airport operators, TSA, and law enforcement ensure smooth and secure passenger, baggage, and cargo flow while maintaining vigilance against threats.

5.5.1 Passenger Security Screening Checkpoint

During the planning phase, airport operators should meet with TSA local leadership to share projections of passenger volumes on key dates, particularly Departure Day. TSA will often coordinate with airlines and the event organizers to get passenger estimates. Using this data, TSA can plan for augmented staffing at the security checkpoints, including authorizing overtime for local officers and recruiting additional TSA staff on a temporary basis from other airports or their National Deployment Force.

The airport should confirm which checkpoint lanes will be operational during peak outbound periods and discuss contingency plans if more capacity is needed.

PROHIBITED ITEMS AND SOUVENIR SCREENING

Several types of souvenirs and items associated with special events have been known to set off screening equipment alarms or require secondary screening. These include:

- **Super Bowl programs:** The commemorative program books sold at championship games are often thick and dense with holographic features. Their thickness can make it difficult to screen through or underneath the book, and the holographic elements can trigger alarms.
- **Miniature baseball bats:** Small souvenir bats handed out at baseball games or tournaments often have to be surrendered at the checkpoint, voluntarily checked in baggage, or shipped home by the passenger.
- **Horseshoes:** At horse racing events or horse shows and sales, attendees sometimes pack horseshoes in their carry-ons as keepsakes. Horseshoes are heavy, solid metal objects with an irregular shape, possibly resembling a threat object, which can trigger security alarms.
- **Derby hats:** The Kentucky Derby is famous for large, elaborate hats decorated with pins, feathers, and other adornments. The accessories (e.g., long hat pins, metal fasteners) can appear suspicious on screening equipment or set off metal detectors, and may be confiscated as a weapon.
- **Car parts:** Fans at motor racing events may purchase or receive small car parts (engine components, car memorabilia, etc.) as souvenirs. These irregularly shaped metal parts can show up on scanners as resembling prohibited items. Depending on the part, TSA or police may determine it could be used as a weapon, resulting in its confiscation or requiring the passenger to remove and add the item to their baggage.
- **Large quantities of alcohol:** Some events coincide with tours or tastings at local distilleries, after which attendees may carry home multiple large liquor bottles that exceed the allowable carry-on limit. Even in checked luggage, there are FAA and TSA regulations on the quantity and alcohol content allowed, meaning bags containing too many bottles or those over proof limits may be pulled for inspection. The airport will need a means to appropriately dispose of these items.

Given the influx of passengers and unusual items, close coordination with the TSA and law enforcement is needed to maintain efficient throughput without compromising security. Stationing LEOs closer to checkpoints during event surge periods allows them to quickly respond to prohibited items or resolve alarms.

One airport described hosting a large gun show near the airport, which led to many passengers traveling with firearms or firearm-related souvenirs. Most attendees were experienced gun owners who were well versed in TSA rules for flying with firearms. Still, the event saw a noticeable uptick in alarms and interventions at both the passenger checkpoint and the checked baggage screening area.

To mitigate this the next year, the airport coordinated with event organizers and vendors in advance of the event. Vendors were advised to avoid giving away replica bullets or gun-shaped novelties that attendees may pack in carry-ons. Event attendees were encouraged to place any such items in checked baggage. By informing attendees in advance that weapon-like souvenirs would not be allowed through security, the airport prevented many potential delays at the checkpoint and reduced the number of calls for service to the checkpoint.

The impact of souvenirs on checkpoint operations is generally mitigated through targeted messages directing passengers to check the items or ship them to their destination. Placing signs and notices at multiple key decision points in the journey from the curb to the checkpoint maximizes the passenger's exposure to the message. These strategic locations include the terminal entrance, airline check-in/bag drop counters, the entrance to security queue lanes, and even parking shuttle buses or rental car return areas. Messaging is most effective when it is specific to the event's context. Coupling the signs with visual icons or images of the specific items can quickly catch the eye of event attendees. Figure 4 shows an example of signage developed by Miami International Airport (MIA) for Super Bowl 54 (2019) to mitigate alarms due to the commemorative programs.

Figure 4. MIA Super Bowl Signage

For some events, the TSA sets up and staffs a table near the security checkpoint queue on Departure Day displaying examples of prohibited items often found and confiscated during screening. This visual display serves as a last-minute check for people to voluntarily surrender items that they forgot were in their bags before entering the queue. Some events correlate with increased likelihood of illicit drug use among attendees. which can lead to an uptick in drugs discovered at the security checkpoints. Amnesty bins can be deployed for passengers to discreetly dispose of illicit substances or other prohibited items without fear of reprisal.

Bourbon and whiskey distillers host multiple events during the Kentucky Derby weekend, which results in many liquor bottles passing through Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport's (SDF) checkpoints and baggage system on departure day, significantly slowing the entire screening process on the airport's busiest day of the year. To help alleviate this challenge, the airport developed humorous but clear signage featuring pictures of liquor bottles and the tagline "Liquor is Liquid" (Figure 5)—a clever reminder that liquor bottles count toward the liquid limits and should be checked.

In recent years, the airport has set up bubble wrapping stations in the check-in lobby where event volunteers help passengers safely wrap the bottles and pack them into checked luggage. This service gently enforces the message and significantly cuts down on bottles appearing at the checkpoint, improving checkpoint flow.

Combining effective signage, advanced communications, and on-site engagement can greatly mitigate the impact of prohibited or problematic items.

Figure 5. SDF Liquor Reminder Signage

ENHANCED SCREENING PROCEDURES

Locally hosted major events can attract an influx of passengers with special needs (e.g., athletes with disabilities or service animals) and large group movements (e.g., large sports teams, military units traveling together). Events such as the Paralympics, adaptive sports competitions, or conferences for persons with disabilities will see an increase in passengers who use wheelchairs, prosthetics, or other mobility aids that require additional screening steps, since they cannot go through standard machines and may trigger alarms that require secondary screening. To maintain efficiency and uphold security, airports can work with TSA to implement enhanced screening procedures tailored to these scenarios.

One effective strategy is to establish a dedicated screening lane during the event for select passenger populations. This lane can be staffed with TSA officers who have specialized training (e.g., TSA Cares) or experience in specialized screening of passengers. By providing a separate lane, passengers who need additional time to pass through screening can do so without feeling rushed, and the regular lanes can continue processing the rest of the queue without significant delay. This dual-lane approach ensures inclusiveness while maintaining security effectiveness and efficiency.

To support this strategy, signage and staff will be needed to direct those passengers who need extra time to the dedicated lane. Coordination with disability advocacy groups or the event organizers in advance of the event can also help inform attendees that special accommodations will be in place, further streamlining the process.

Large groups traveling together (e.g., sports teams, marching bands, military units, or tour groups) can overcrowd checkpoints if they arrive en masse and without preparation. However, this challenge can be mitigated by using group coordinators or liaisons, as demonstrated in the example below.

One airport shared a successful practice from an annual event where Army troops travel home after a local base graduation around Christmas. An Army-appointed travel coordinator gathers about 30–50 soldiers at a time before they enter the checkpoint and gives them a briefing on TSA procedures. This short briefing covers the basic passenger screening protocols (e.g., removing shoes and belts, emptying pockets, taking laptops out, limitations on liquids) and answers questions from the group. Many of these troops have rarely flown before, so the orientation dramatically reduces confusion and mistakes during screening.

After the briefing, the group proceeds through security in an orderly fashion, already aware of what to do, which speeds up their processing. The coordinator stays with the group to assist and ensure compliance.

This concept can also be applied to other traveling groups, with the team coach, tour leader, or other designated group leader acting as the coordinator. Airports can coordinate with known travel groups to

suggest they organize and brief their members before arriving at security or allow an airport representative to conduct the briefing. The presence of a coordinator not only makes the process more efficient but also enhances security as the group is less likely to cause a distraction or bottleneck that could divert TSA attention.

5.5.2 Baggage and Checked Item Screening

Large events often correlate with passengers bringing more baggage, including unusual or oversized items. Participants in sporting events may check skis, golf clubs, bicycles, musical instruments, or other gear that may not fit through the standard automated Explosive Detection Systems (EDS) used to screen checked luggage. Therefore, these oversized items often require manual inspection or alternate processes. Each special screening procedure takes significantly more time than a normal bag going through the system, and the cumulative extra time can slow down the entire checked baggage screening operation.

Airports expecting a surge in oversized, heavy, or unusually shaped items can coordinate with TSA to develop a baggage screening plan. This may involve operating a separate oversized baggage screening station for the event period where TSA dedicates officers to handling these items away from the main flow of regular baggage. The station may require additional equipment such as Explosive Trace Detection systems or portable x-ray machines.

One airport operator shared their experience with hosting professional bowling tournaments for several years. Professional bowlers travel with multiple heavy bowling balls that have dense cores with atypical shapes that consistently trigger screening alarms. Additionally, the size, weight, and material of the bags can slow down conveyor belts or jam the system, which may result in the bags requiring a manual handling process.

Recognizing the recurring challenges for both airlines and tournament competitors, the organizers partnered with a national shipping provider to offer on-site shipment services at local hotels and bowling centers. This has significantly reduced the number of bowling ball bags processed through airport systems. The airport places signage in high-traffic public areas of the terminal to alert arriving passengers of this option prior to their departure day.

TSA staffing levels are often increased during the event, particularly on peak departure days, to accommodate the volume of checked and carry-on bags containing bowling equipment. Officers stationed at the checkpoint and in checked baggage areas are prepared for the extra manual screening required, and canine teams are often deployed during peak hours to expedite the process and maintain throughput.

Checked bags containing multiple bowling balls are typically routed through the oversized baggage belt to avoid disrupting the flow of standard luggage or straining the system’s belts. Airlines increase counter staffing during the event to assist with metering, tagging, and ensuring proper routing of these atypical bags. Two permanent remote bag-drop locations allow passengers to check luggage before entering the terminal, giving airport staff greater control over how heavy and irregular bags are introduced into the system.

Even without the added complication of oversized baggage, the volume of checked bags can significantly increase on Departure Day. Some airports use the event as an opportunity to make physical and operational improvements to baggage handling systems in anticipation of the increased demand. These measures could include adding more baggage carts, enhancing the system capacity, or allocating extra ramp staff to assist with loading. An overloaded baggage conveyor system can be a hidden chokepoint that spills back into the terminal if bags cannot be cleared rapidly.

TSA can also bring in additional officers or canine teams specifically for the baggage screening area to help reduce the number of bags that need to process through the EDS or manual inspection. TSA can also implement alternate screening strategies for low-risk bags.

Airports can coordinate with airlines to receive forecasts of the number of checked bags expected per flight on Departure Day. Working with charter handlers can provide estimates of bag counts on charter flights. With accurate data, the airport can work with TSA to ensure adequate staffing and machines are in place to handle the anticipated screening load.

Additionally, arranging for off-site baggage drop-off or early bag checks for event participants and attendees can support the increased screening demand by staggering the baggage going through the process.

5.5.3 Federal Inspection Services

If the event is international in nature or likely to attract many foreign visitors—such as a World Cup match, a Formula 1 race, or a global convention—the airport's CBP facility may need to be temporarily expanded. Large international events are often hosted in cities with robust international airports, but the unusually high surge may strain the infrastructure and staffing of existing customs halls.

CBP has its own resource planning, but the agency relies on information provided by airports and airlines. Coordinating with CBP in the early planning phases allows the agency to arrange for additional officers on duty for the expected peak period(s). This also allows the CBP and the airport to discuss and confirm contingency plans that may affect international operations.

For outbound international passengers (foreign visitors returning home or participants heading to another country), CBP may also need to handle increased workloads for export inspections or document checks. If pre-clearance or outbound customs checks are a factor (e.g., private aircraft, certain charter flights), those operations will need to be scaled up similarly.

5.5.4 Cargo Security

Cargo operations usually run in the background of passenger travel, and routine cargo is generally unaffected by locally hosted major events. However, some major events have unusual cargo security considerations involving special shipments directly related to the event. Two types of major events are known to generate significant additional cargo activity: equestrian events and major motorsports races.

High-profile horse races and international horse competitions and sales may involve transporting horses and related equipment by air. Domestically, most horses are transported by road in trailers. Internationally, or for owners who have the resources, horses are flown in on large cargo aircraft outfitted for equine transport. These flights require special handling and training to safely load and unload the horses. CBP will need to be involved in clearing the cargo arriving from international locations.

Blue Grass Airport (LEX) in Lexington, Kentucky is in the heart of horse country. LEX is a smaller airport without the infrastructure to handle very large planes, so when an international VIP, such as the Prince of Dubai, participates in local horse sales or races, he often transports the valuable racehorses on his private Boeing 747 cargo plane.

LEX cannot accommodate a plane as large as a 747, so the plane typically lands at the larger, nearby Louisville Airport (SDF). The horses are then transferred by road to Lexington. Security and customs officers at SDF coordinate to ensure the area is secure, the horses are unloaded safely, and the transfer to ground transport is managed without incident.

The US hosts several internationally attended motorsport events such as the Indianapolis 500, NASCAR series races, Formula 1 Grand Prix races, etc. These events often involve teams from around the world transporting specialized cars, tools, replacement parts, and even garage setups in cargo planes. An airport near the racetrack may see a temporary surge in large cargo freighter activity during the event, each flight potentially carrying millions of dollars' worth of cargo that must be handled carefully and securely.

The Circuit of the Americas (COTA) in Austin, Texas hosts Formula 1 races and other big, international motorsport events throughout the year. The local CBP took an innovative approach to managing the increased cargo demand by arranging for a portion of the COTA grounds to be designated as a bonded customs area for the duration of the event. This allows the international cargo arriving for the race to be officially received and inspected either at the airport or at the racetrack venue itself under customs supervision.

CBP still maintains control over the import process, but this strategy spreads out the demand and reduces bottlenecks. For the airport, having the bonded area at the track means less congestion on their ramps from unloading multiple huge cargo planes in quick succession.

Loading and unloading these types of cargo require experienced personnel and often special equipment such as moveable ramps, cranes, or custom pallets. Contractors hired for these events are typically experts in the specialized operations. If cargo requiring specialized handlers or equipment is expected, airports should coordinate in advance with the freight handlers and ground service providers.

Additionally, the airport will need to ensure that appropriate security protocols are in place. These unique arrivals often attract the attention of local enthusiasts and event attendees who want to view the horses or race cars from the fence line. Extra barriers, signage, or security personnel can be deployed to manage or discourage crowds near the cargo area.

Coordination between canine cargo screening providers and airport law enforcement is important when cargo operations are expanded or security postures are heightened. These third-party canine cargo screening teams operate under TSA's Certified Cargo Screening Program–K9 and follow alarm resolution procedures that have been pre-approved by TSA. As such, their protocols may differ from those typically followed by airport LEOs or TSA officers in passenger screening areas.

PARAS 0032: *Enhancing Security of Cargo Operations at Airports* provides guidance to help airports make informed decisions that promote safe, compliant, and efficient cargo operations.

5.6 Terminal Concessions and Services

A major event can surge passenger volumes, driving up demand for terminal concessions and passenger services. Ensuring the terminal can accommodate this influx without sacrificing service quality or safety is an important element of major event planning.

Research into the root causes of unruly behavior incidents in the airport terminal indicates that stressors associated with commercial air travel (e.g., noise, crowds, delays, sanitation) can significantly affect passengers, increasing the likelihood that frustration and anxiety may escalate into disruptive incidents.

ACRP Report 280: *Reducing And Managing Disruptive And Unruly Behavior In Airports* (expected publication in summer 2025) provides in-depth guidance into facility and operational modifications that can help airports create a less stressful travel journey.

5.6.1 Terminal Tenants

Airport tenants (e.g., airlines, concessionaires, service providers) can be significantly affected by the operational surges associated with major events, particularly on peak days such as Departure Day. Early and ongoing coordination with tenants supports operational continuity and gives them the lead time needed to adjust staffing, inventory, and procedures in response to expected demand.

Some tenants may need to supplement their local workforce by bringing in personnel from other locations, often referred to as TDY staff. Airports can support this by expediting necessary badging processes or facilitating short-term escorted access. Additional guidance on TDY badging procedures for locally hosted major events can be found in Section 5.1.1.

It is also important to communicate any anticipated changes to facility access or operations to tenants. If vehicle gates, airside access points, service roads, or security checkpoints will be restricted due to VIP movements or event-specific security measures, early notification allows tenants to adjust routing for deliveries, fuel trucks, crew transfers, or other essential services.

Hosting regular tenant briefings in the lead-up to the event fosters critical information sharing and transparency, facilitates early identification of operational concerns, and enables joint problem-solving. These meetings help ensure all tenant operations remain aligned with the broader airport event plan.

CONCESSIONAIRES

Notifying concessionaires (restaurants, bars, shops, lounges) well in advance of a major event allows them to proactively prepare for the surge in demand. Early coordination enables tenants to scale up food, beverage, and retail inventories; bring in supplemental staff; and modify operating hours as needed to maintain service continuity. Failure to prepare adequately can result in long wait times, service delays, and shortages, which can increase passenger frustration and contribute to unruly behavior in the terminal.

Additionally, overcrowding in concession areas may create chokepoints or obstruct key egress routes, complicating emergency response or evacuation procedures. Congested areas near gate hold rooms, bars, or food courts may also become hotspots for disruptive behavior, especially when combined with flight delays or missed connections.

To help mitigate these risks, airports can consider implementing several operational and security-focused measures:

- Coordinate with vendors to adjust delivery schedules during the event to avoid peak vehicle traffic periods and reduce vehicle congestion on the airside and landside.
- Encourage or facilitate temporary points of sale (e.g., mobile kiosks, carts, or pop-up counters) in high-traffic areas to alleviate long queues.

- Monitor concession areas closely, especially during peak travel times or after high stakes sporting events, when emotions may be elevated and alcohol consumption may increase.
- Enforce airport alcohol service policies, including cut-off times and drink limits, in collaboration with law enforcement and concessionaires; LEOs and concession staff should be aligned on policies for refusing service to intoxicated individuals and escalating situations, if necessary.
- Encourage the use of signage or announcements reminding passengers of acceptable conduct and reinforcing behavioral expectations within dining and lounge areas.

Close coordination between airport terminal operations, tenant managers, and security teams ensures that concession operations support the broader security posture of the airport during high-traffic events.

FACILITIES

Increased passenger traffic during major events leads to heavier use of restrooms, seating areas, and trash receptacles, which carry operational and security implications. Increased custodial staffing and cleaning frequency throughout the event period is needed to maintain a safe and sanitary environment. The facilities department should ensure that restrooms and common areas are consistently stocked with essential supplies such as soap, paper products, and hand sanitizer to support hygiene and reduce passenger frustration.

Unattended spills, overflowing trash bins, or poorly maintained restrooms can escalate tensions and contribute to an environment perceived as chaotic or neglected. More critically, trash receptacles can be used to conceal prohibited items or weapons, posing a potential threat to airport security. Frequent waste removal, especially from high-traffic or sensitive areas, helps mitigate this risk.

Public restrooms located before security screening warrant special attention. These spaces are frequently used by passengers to dispose of restricted items (e.g., liquids, tools, illicit drugs) before reaching the checkpoint. Airports can help reduce the volume of contraband discarded in restrooms by increasing the frequency of restroom checks, as well as placing discreet signage directing passengers to dispose of prohibited items in designated disposal areas.

Deploying facilities personnel in high-traffic areas such as restrooms, food courts, and gate hold rooms enables faster response to sanitation concerns and improves coordination with airport security and operations teams. Their visible presence also contributes to a safer, more orderly environment during periods of increased activity.

5.6.2 Emergency Medical Services

Large-scale events increase the likelihood of medical incidents due to higher passenger volumes, extended wait times, and heightened environmental stressors. On peak travel days, airports may face a broad range of issues requiring immediate medical response.

EMS support planning should reflect the nature of the event. For instance, entertainment or cultural-driven events may increase alcohol- or substance-related calls. These considerations have both safety and security implications, as untreated medical incidents can escalate into disruptive or unruly behavior, impact crowd movement, or trigger false alarms for suspicious behavior.

To mitigate these risks, airports can coordinate with on-site medical providers or local EMS to bolster medical staffing and coverage during critical periods. Strategies include:

- Deploying mobile EMS teams throughout the terminal to reduce response time and avoid delays caused by roadway congestion
- Designating and staffing a first-aid station inside the terminal as a centralized location for walk-up care or triage
- Stocking medical equipment and supplies (e.g., oxygen, defibrillators, Stop the Bleed kits, stretchers) in accessible locations throughout the terminal
- Briefing medical personnel on the event schedule, expected crowd sizes, and potential behavioral or environmental risk factors

Proactive planning ensures that medical response remains rapid and organized, supports a calm and safe environment, and reduces the burden on law enforcement by diverting medical-related incidents away from broader operational disruptions.

5.7 Vehicle Traffic Management

Effective traffic management is essential for airports when preparing for demand surges and heightened security requirements associated with major locally hosted events. A well-developed traffic management plan addresses both operational and security considerations to ensure smooth and safe passenger flow and vehicle movements. This includes mitigating congestion along the connecting roadways and terminal curbs, which can quickly become a chokepoint during peak arrival and departure periods. Proactive coordination and planning paired with real-time traffic monitoring can help identify and resolve issues before they impact airport access and security.

The traffic management plan should reflect the mix of vehicles expected during the event and their anticipated volumes. This includes both commercial vehicles (e.g., taxis, rideshare cars, hotel shuttles, charter buses, limousines, delivery trucks) and non-commercial vehicles (e.g., private cars, rental cars, RVs). Each category has different characteristics that should be considered in capacity planning.

Anticipating the peak volumes of each type is crucial. For instance, a major sports event may generate a huge influx of charter buses and rideshares, while a political convention may see more private vehicles and official motorcades. The results of the event scoping activities should be used to help forecast how many of each vehicle type will be using the airport roads and curbs at various times throughout the day and event period.

Major events often create unusual but predictable peak demands, such as an inbound surge a few days to a week before the event and a massive outbound surge afterward, typically the highest being on Departure Day. The traffic management plan should account for both operating demands as they will not reflect vehicle traffic operations on an average day.

5.7.1 Connecting Roadway Network

The airport's event traffic management plan should account for all roadways leading into and out of airport property and reflect the types of vehicles expected during the event. Effective coordination between ground transportation, operations, and airport law enforcement is key to monitoring traffic conditions and maintaining a steady flow.

Airports with multiple approach routes should consider how their usage can affect the traffic management plan. It may be possible to reroute traffic through feeder roads to minimize congestion along the main approach route, or close off feeder roads to redirect vehicles to vehicle checkpoints.

Adjusting traffic control measures (e.g., traffic signals, lane closures) provides the airport a great measure of control over vehicle traffic during the event. For example, the airport may temporarily modify traffic control measures on feeder roads to handle incoming and outgoing vehicle flows in the days leading up to the event, and then reconfigure the controls for the heavy, concentrated outbound rush on Departure Day. Airports with a limited number of approach roadways will have fewer routes to analyze, but greater opportunity for bottlenecks and congestion to impact the airport operations.

Keeping roadways flowing smoothly reduces the chance of frustrated drivers abandoning cars and causing gridlock outside the terminal, potentially delaying emergency response.

ROADWAY TRAFFIC PLANNING

Effective coordination between the airport's ground transportation management, operations, and security—including airport law enforcement and contract security—is essential to maintain a steady flow of vehicles through the airport during the increased traffic. Joint planning and communication among these groups ensures that a bottleneck is addressed collectively and immediately, rather than each department reacting separately and in conflicting ways. A vehicle traffic management or landside operations planning committee provides multiple opportunities for the relevant stakeholders to meet and develop plans for the event.

Establishing clear communication protocols during the planning stage can greatly support the coordination efforts between the stakeholders managing vehicle traffic. During the event, the stakeholders can use the communication channels and equipment established in the coordination planning to share information in real time and communicate dispatch instructions. Practicing these protocols before the event can improve familiarity with the plans and equipment, as well as identify any potential issues or complications. Joint planning within the vehicle traffic management committee allows the stakeholders to:

- Discuss the initial traffic management plan
- Identify and plan for contingency operations
- Agree on operational trigger points (e.g., stalled vehicle) and appropriate intervention activities (e.g., LEO dispatched)
- Finalize the vehicle traffic management plan

Including city or state road/highway authorities in the traffic management planning can greatly assist with traffic control modifications on the connecting roads for the event, such as temporary road signs, modified signal timings, reversible lanes, barricades, or road modifications. Some local jurisdictions have taken the opportunity to improve or expand roadways connecting to the airport to support the increase in traffic during major events such as the Olympic Games. Planners should consider how the planned modifications may impact the traffic entering and exiting the airport; new or closed access roads may require alternate plans or contingencies.

ROADWAY STAFFING STRATEGIES

Deploying law enforcement or traffic control officers at strategic points along the airport roadway network is an effective way to both manage the flow and quickly respond to arising problems. These

officers can actively direct drivers at critical junctures and also initiate an immediate response if an accident, vehicle breakdown, or other incident occurs.

The planning committee should identify the chokepoints and decision points in the road network where having an officer and/or marked police vehicle present would be beneficial. During a surge, these spots can become conflict points due to vehicles changing lanes last minute, traffic light timing, etc. Deploying an officer to manually direct traffic can keep vehicles moving smoothly. Officers should be deployed where they can influence traffic flow most effectively. Historical data can help guide positioning; intersections or approach ramps that have experienced backups during past events or regular peak periods are strong candidates for LEO deployment. Key locations include:

- Major intersections on the airport access roads
- Merge points combining traffic from different sources (e.g., where rental car shuttle traffic meets private vehicle traffic)
- Entrances to terminal curbside areas
- Exits from parking lots or garages feeding into the main roadway

Officers at these posts are tasked with actively managing the traffic as needed. This can mean directing vehicles using hand signals or flashlight wands, overriding traffic signal cycles when manual control is necessary, and guiding drivers into correct lanes. The presence of law enforcement in high-visibility vests at these points also acts as a deterrent to unsafe driver behavior that could worsen congestion, such as illegal U-turns. The presence of an officer and/or police vehicle (with or without lights flashing) is often enough to encourage drivers to follow traffic rules and maintain situational awareness.

Equally important is the ability for law enforcement to respond immediately to incidents such as crashes or stalled vehicles on the roadways. Strategically positioning LEOs throughout the roadway network distributes readiness so officers can reach the scene of an incident within minutes. The use of motorcycles or bicycles along the roadway allows for quick navigation through congestion to get to an incident. The officers at fixed posts can also leave their post temporarily if they are the closest to an incident, knowing that others will cover traffic control in the interim. This proactive stance can reduce the chance that a minor incident escalates into significant gridlock.

Patrol cars and motorcycles often carry basic emergency equipment (e.g., flares, cones), which allows the officers to quickly secure the scene, begin to re-route traffic around the obstruction, and radio for a tow truck or additional assistance if needed. This greatly minimizes the clearance time for any incident.

Some large airport police departments have specialized traffic control units whose officers are trained to expedite vehicular flow along roadways and intersections. Airports of all sizes could benefit from leveraging relationships with partner local law enforcement agencies to augment airport vehicle traffic management personnel with trained LEOs or civilian traffic controllers.

LARGE VEHICLE OPERATIONS

Large vehicles such as charter buses, limousines, moving/box trucks, and RVs present challenges at an airport curbside because of their size and limited maneuverability. During events, the number of buses shuttling conference groups or event attendees can spike significantly. To prevent oversized vehicles from congesting limited curb space or blocking in smaller vehicles, airports can designate alternate routes and staging areas specifically for these vehicle types

If the airport roadway design allows, routing large vehicles away from the primary passenger car lanes reduces the risk of a slow bus causing a backup of cars behind it. During an event, the airport can relieve pressure on the roadways and reduce overall congestion by enforcing that all large vehicles must use the dedicated route to eliminate the intermixing of large vehicles with general traffic. This strategy also tends to be safer, as mixing buses and small passenger cars in heavy traffic can increase accident risk.

Some airports have a dedicated bus route to separate bus traffic during normal operations. If this route cannot be used for other large vehicle traffic (e.g., the route is access controlled), or if a dedicated bus lane does not exist, the airport may consider using a less commonly used roadway or an outer lane of the main road as a dedicated lane for large vehicles. Cones and signs can be deployed to mark the route clearly. With this strategy, large vehicles can bypass passenger car queues and reach their loading zone more efficiently without impeding the flow of smaller vehicles and vice versa.

When planning the alternate routes, airports should take into consideration that large vehicles not only take up more space, they also have longer acceleration/deceleration times and wider turning radiuses. This can be accounted for by providing dedicated turn lanes or more distance to merge. Tight corners should be avoided and, if necessary, obstacles that could hinder large vehicle movement (e.g., traffic cones, temporary barriers) should be removed or temporarily relocated. Traffic controllers stationed at critical points along the route can help the large vehicles merge into general traffic.

Reserving specific curbside areas away from the main traffic flow for large vehicles to stop helps contain their activity to one or two controlled zones, rather than allowing them to appear randomly along the curb and disrupt available loading and unloading space. These zones should be clearly marked with signage, and personnel will need to direct and control the movement of the large vehicles.

Another strategy is to designate holding areas where large vehicles can take more time to load and unload without impacting general traffic operations. Many airports have a cell phone lot or holding lot that can serve as the temporary large vehicle holding area. If the holding area is too far to expect passengers to walk, the airport can require the vehicles to wait offsite and only proceed to the terminal when their passengers are ready to board. This prevents a line of large vehicles from congesting curb space for long periods. The operation can be coordinated between traffic monitors at the holding area and the curbside.

Airports can further support this strategy by designating routes for the large vehicles to transit from the holding area to the curbside and then out of the airport that minimize interference with general traffic. This may involve the use of typically restricted entrances or exits in the holding area to allow the vehicles to easily enter the route to the curb. Traffic cones and signs can be deployed along the route to guide the drivers.

If the event organizer has a transportation coordinator, the airport can work closely with them to schedule bus or shuttle arrivals/departures in waves to avoid too many arriving at the airport simultaneously.

During certain types of events, some airports may be able to coordinate with the charter operators, tour bus companies, hired limousine operators, or team logistics managers to assign loading/unloading time windows. This would allow the airport to meter the large vehicles arriving at the airport to a small degree—although arrival times are often beyond the airport's control and subject to change. However, knowing when the large vehicles are expected throughout the day allows the airport to plan for staffing needs accordingly.

Well in advance of the event, the airport should communicate the operational plans for large vehicles to any known charter or shuttle operators. The airport's PIO and the event planning committee should also be informed of the plan so they can include instructions in event messaging. Providing maps and diagrams can also help reduce confusion during the event.

VEHICLE CHECKPOINTS

During high-security events, airports may activate additional or temporary vehicle checkpoints along the roadway to verify that each incoming vehicle has legitimate business on airport property. While this approach is uncommon at commercial US airports and not used for typical, major events (e.g., high-attendance sports games, concerts, conventions), it has been implemented at select US airports during protest activity or other events with elevated threat levels. These checkpoints are generally reserved for exceptional circumstances involving heightened security concerns or risk of civil unrest. When used, they must be carefully planned and executed to enhance security while minimizing disruption to traffic operations. Their effectiveness depends on thoughtful placement, interagency coordination, and contingency planning.

Vehicle checkpoints should be positioned along airport access roads well before the terminal area, allowing officers to intercept and redirect unauthorized or suspicious vehicles before they reach the curbside or congested terminal zones. Temporary barricades, cones, and signage can be used to reduce lanes and guide vehicles into a controlled funnel where officers can conduct screenings. This upstream placement reduces the likelihood of curbside congestion and helps maintain secure terminal operations.

Law enforcement personnel assigned to these checkpoints can include sworn officers from local and airport agencies. Coordination between law enforcement units can help divide responsibilities efficiently; one unit may manage the vehicle checkpoint itself while another unit assists with traffic flow and queuing beyond the checkpoint area. Officers will need to maintain real-time communication with each other and with the airport's operations center to address emerging issues quickly. For higher-profile events, such as those involving dignitaries or national security concerns, federal agencies may also be involved in checkpoint planning and staffing to ensure appropriate threat response.

Screening procedures typically involve officers asking drivers to state their purpose for entering the airport and, when applicable, present identification or event-related credentials. In anticipation of a major event, airports can simplify this process by issuing pre-authorized vehicle permits or hangtags to tenants, staff, and designated personnel (e.g., event organizer–provided charter bus drivers) to allow for quicker identification at the checkpoint. This can be particularly effective when large numbers of authorized personnel must move through the checkpoint regularly during the event.

Clear and proactive communication is essential for both safety and compliance at vehicle checkpoints. Electronic message boards and temporary signage placed well ahead of the checkpoint should notify drivers to prepare identification documents and expect delays. Publishing traffic advisories through public channels in advance, including airport websites, local media, and social media platforms, can alert the traveling public to the presence of checkpoints and reduce frustration or noncompliance.

Despite careful planning, some level of congestion is likely. Airports should account for this by integrating checkpoint impacts into broader traffic flow and contingency plans. This may include the designation of a secondary screening area or remote pull-off location where vehicles flagged for further inspection can be directed without impeding the primary checkpoint lane. In cases of severe backups or emergencies inside the airport, contingency procedures should be in place to temporarily suspend or expedite checkpoint operations to allow for the rapid clearance of vehicles. Coordination with city or

state transportation agencies may be necessary to manage overflow traffic on public roads and highways leading to the airport.

FIRST RESPONDER VEHICLE ACCESS

Ensuring emergency responders can reach the terminal and other critical areas is a top priority during major events. Dedicated emergency lanes or routes should be established and clearly marked as emergency access lanes on airport roadways whenever possible, especially if the traffic flow has been modified in any way for the event (e.g., checkpoints, reverse traffic flows). This may be as simple as reserving a lane for emergency vehicles and blocking it off with traffic cones.

As a contingency, the airport should consider identifying alternate paths such as service roads or airfield perimeter roads that lead first responders to the terminal or incident site in the event that normal inbound routes are congested or closed. In a worst-case scenario, local police can escort ambulances or fire trucks via oncoming lanes or other routes that are kept free of civilian traffic.

If resources permit, strategically stationing emergency response units at key locations around the property can greatly enhance response times, particularly during periods of heavy congestion or high foot traffic. Positioning fire vehicles, ambulances, and other emergency vehicles in available facilities (e.g., unused aircraft hangars, maintenance bays) inside the airport perimeter allows responders to bypass external traffic chokepoints and reach incidents more efficiently. This proactive approach is especially valuable during high-traffic events or peak operational hours, when conventional access routes may be delayed.

Additionally, tow trucks can be pre-positioned or on standby to further maintain flow and reduce disruptions. These units enable rapid clearance of blocked roadways, particularly along designated emergency routes, security checkpoints, or within high-density traffic zones. By quickly removing obstructions, tow trucks help maintain open lanes for fire, medical, and law enforcement vehicles, ensuring they can reach the incident site without unnecessary delay. Ideally, tow trucks should be stationed near key access points or pre-identified chokepoints to allow for immediate deployment when needed.

Continual communication and flexibility are key to effective emergency response as conditions can change rapidly during large events.

5.7.2 Curbside Loading/Unloading and Staging Areas

Managing the curbside during peak events is essential to maintain safety, terminal security, and smooth traffic flow. The sudden influx of commercial and passenger vehicles can overwhelm curbside capacity if proactive strategies are not incorporated into the overall vehicle traffic management plan.

One effective method to reduce curbside congestion and confusion is to clearly designate curb space for specific types of vehicles, such as private passenger drop-offs, taxis, rideshare pickups, hotel shuttles, charter buses, etc. Airports that do not typically separate traffic types may benefit from creating a temporary event-specific curbside layout to improve flow and reduce driver uncertainty. Temporary signage, cones, and traffic delineators can help enforce this segmentation, supported by on-site traffic control personnel to guide vehicles and ensure compliance.

One interviewed airport described a para-sporting event where teams arrived with oversized, adapted sporting equipment shipped in large boxes or crates. Retrieval of this equipment often required box trucks or similar commercial vehicles, which posed unique security and logistical concerns. These large vehicles, if allowed to load curbside, could create dangerous blockages, significantly extend dwell times, and raise major security concerns.

To address this, the airport identified a designated staging area at one end of the curb for these vehicles to park and load equipment safely without disrupting terminal access. Law enforcement conducted regular patrols of the area to ensure safety and compliance. This example provides a useful model for balancing accessibility with operational needs.

Throughout the event, additional traffic control officers may be required along the curb to actively manage vehicle movement, guide pedestrian crossings, and prevent common issues such as double-parking or vehicles dwelling too long in loading zones. These personnel play a key role in optimizing curb use by directing vehicles to underutilized areas, reminding drivers to move along promptly, and de-escalating potential conflicts.

Limiting curbside dwell times is essential for maintaining throughput. Enforcing strict time limits and a policy of "active loading and unloading only" can discourage drivers from leaving vehicles unattended or using the curb for extended periods. In particular, limousines can pose a unique security concern when drivers exit their vehicles to meet passengers inside the terminal, leaving the vehicle unattended at the curb. Airports can mitigate this by establishing agreements with local limousine companies that outline proper staging procedures, clearly defining curbside behavior in airport regulations, and increasing curbside patrols to enforce compliance.

Temporary signage (digital or static) should be deployed well in advance of the event to inform arriving drivers of rule changes, such as shorter dwell time limits or newly assigned staging areas. Signage can also direct drivers to use waiting lots or cell phone lots to wait for passengers or for extended farewells to help keep curb areas clear. The airport's PIO can play a critical role in this effort by disseminating information through the airport website, social media, event partner channels, and terminal displays to ensure broad awareness.

Technology can further support enforcement or rules at the curbside. Surveillance and LPR systems can track vehicle dwell times and identify repeat offenders or unattended vehicles. This data can help traffic officers respond more efficiently and identify patterns of non-compliant behavior. In more serious situations, airports with citation authority may enforce penalties for violations such as disregarding officer instructions, obstructing traffic, or causing disruptions at the curb.

The presence of a tow truck stationed in a visible location near the curb serves as a strong deterrent to drivers who might otherwise linger or leave vehicles unattended. If a vehicle does block access, especially in the event of an emergency, having the tow truck on site ensures it can be removed immediately to restore access for responders or maintain flow for arriving and departing traffic.

5.7.3 ADA Accessible Loading Zones

Events that attract a high volume of individuals who use mobility aids, such as para-sporting events or conferences serving older adults, can create additional operational challenges at the curb. These individuals often require more time to safely load and unload at the curb, particularly when traveling with large mobility aids such as wheelchairs or walkers. To support this, airports can proactively

designate accessible loading zones that comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines, ensuring sufficient space for ramp deployment, mobility assistance, and safe pedestrian movement.

These accessible areas should be clearly marked with high-contrast signage, located near primary entrances, and staffed with personnel trained to assist passengers with disabilities. Depending on expected demand, airports may also consider temporary curbside modifications such as widened zones, dedicated ADA assistance teams, or the provision of portable boarding ramps. Incorporating these adjustments into the curbside management plan helps maintain overall flow while ensuring a safe and inclusive experience for all passengers.

5.7.4 Split Curbside Operations

Airports with separate curbsides for departures and arrivals will naturally divide vehicle traffic during normal operations. During major events, this separation can be further leveraged to reduce congestion by actively managing how vehicles are distributed between the two curbs. Positioning traffic controllers at the entrance or just before the terminal roadway split allows them to direct vehicles based on their purpose at the airport and real-time congestion levels. For instance, charter buses may be directed to unload passengers at the arrivals curb instead of departures during peak departure curves to reduce congestion. This uses the full capacity of both roadways.

During the absolute peak periods, traffic control officers may need to implement special interventions. One approach is to establish a metering system that only allows a certain number of vehicles access to the curbside at a time. Vehicles may be permitted to enter the curbside in batches, allowing each batch just enough time to load or unload before the next batch of vehicles is allowed entry. Traffic controllers will need to coordinate between the hold point and the curbside to indicate when the next batch may be released. However, this strategy may create congestion along the roadways.

Another strategy is to temporarily dedicate one level for a specific type of traffic. For Departure Day, the airport may designate the entirety of a larger terminal curbside to departure traffic and direct arrival traffic to a smaller curbside. For events with participants bringing large equipment that may require longer loading or unloading times, one curb may be dedicated to vehicles loading or unloading the equipment.

By actively managing the two-curbside system, airports can roughly double the usable curb space during an event. Instead of one level overflowing while the other is underutilized, both departure and arrival curbs can share the load. Using staff and signs to guide vehicles in real time reduces overall wait times for curb access and keeps each level flowing more continuously.

Signage plays a critical role in supporting the distribution of vehicles. Electronic message boards or temporary signs placed well ahead of the decision point can be used to convey instructions for the temporary operations (e.g., “Use Upper Level for Arrivals”). These should be placed far enough upstream for drivers to safely get into the correct lane. Temporarily updating overhead highway signs or road signs leading to the terminal with event-specific directions (e.g., “Event Pick-Ups on Lower Level”) can also support this effort, particularly for events with longer durations (e.g., Summer Olympic Games). On the approach roads, staff wearing high-visibility vests can use handheld signs or flags to supplement static signage, especially during peak periods.

The messaging for any temporary adjustments to traffic flow should be simple and clear. Additionally, terminal wayfinding needs to support the change to operations, especially if the arrival and departure curbs are temporarily reversed.

5.7.5 Roadway Surveillance and Monitoring

Active surveillance of airport approach roads, parking areas, and curbsides is critical during high-demand events to detect threats and manage congestion in real time. A combination of technology and personnel can provide situational awareness of the vehicles traversing the airport property during the event.

CAMERAS

Cameras and CCTV systems are among the most widely implemented surveillance tools at airports of all sizes. These systems offer a reliable, real-time method for monitoring vehicle and pedestrian movement across key areas. Existing cameras positioned along access roads, curbsides, and entry points can be leveraged to track traffic flow throughout the day, detect stalled vehicles or accidents, and quickly identify conditions that may lead to congestion or delays. This visibility allows airport operations teams to respond proactively by dispatching assistance, redirecting traffic, or deploying alternative traffic management strategies.

During locally hosted major events, it may be necessary to augment the CCTV system to cover gaps in video coverage or capture footage of critical areas from multiple directions. Mobile camera units on trailers can be temporarily placed at key intersections or remote parking areas to expand this coverage. These trailers may require coordination with the airport's IT department to ensure the cameras connect to the airport's CCTV system.

To ensure effective situational awareness and response, the Incident Command Center, law enforcement, and other key stakeholders need real-time access to all relevant CCTV feeds. Assigning additional airport and law enforcement personnel to actively monitor live video feeds during the event significantly increases the likelihood of detecting suspicious activity, traffic issues, or other anomalies along the roadways and curbsides in real time. Access to the live feed enhances the dispatch and operations personnel's ability to monitor developing situations, allocate resources efficiently, and rapidly respond to incidents as they arise.

Establishing a centralized operations center where representatives from ground transportation, airport operations, security, law enforcement, and emergency services can monitor the same feeds simultaneously can greatly improve coordination efforts. A shared live dashboard can display CCTV feeds, traffic speeds, and incident alerts, enabling all parties to make informed, unified decisions.

In cases where key stakeholder groups operate out of separate facilities, such as an airport operations center and a police dispatch unit, direct communication lines and liaisons can help maintain close collaboration. Leveraging communication platforms that support secure, real-time sharing of CCTV footage with authorized remote users can be especially useful for stakeholders not physically present at the event site, allowing them to maintain oversight of critical areas. Testing this functionality ahead of the event will help identify and resolve any compatibility or access issues in advance.

Advanced video analytics can significantly improve the ability to monitor vehicle activity in and around the airport, particularly when there are limited resources to watch the camera feeds. Vehicle counting, stopped vehicle detection, and traffic flow analysis capabilities can help identify unusual patterns such

as unauthorized vehicle presence, prolonged idling, or sudden congestion. These tools can automatically flag issues for further investigation, enabling staff to respond quickly to stalled vehicles, potential security concerns, or emerging traffic bottlenecks before they impact operations.

PARAS 0034: *Optimization of Airport Security Camera Systems* provides detailed guidance on camera systems that can help improve an airport's monitoring and surveillance capabilities.

LICENSE PLATE READERS

Airports of all sizes can benefit from using LPR systems to monitor vehicles entering or operating on airport property. Linking the airport's LPR feeds to law enforcement databases (e.g. Department of Motor Vehicle records, FBI's National Crime Information Center) will flag plates associated with stolen vehicles, criminal warrants or watchlists. If a license plate on a "stop list" is detected, police can be dispatched to intercept that vehicle.

Strategically placing LPR cameras at choke points such as parking garage entrances, terminal frontage roads, and airport entrance roads allows automatic logging of plate numbers. Video analytics with LPR capabilities can help fill coverage gaps at airports that lack dedicated LPR systems by turning existing surveillance cameras into multi-functional tools for vehicle identification and monitoring.

AERIAL SURVEILLANCE

Aerial monitoring provides airport personnel with a broad, real-time overview of vehicle traffic patterns, enabling rapid identification of issues that may not be visible from ground-level cameras. This bird's-eye perspective is particularly valuable for spotting traffic congestion forming on approach roads, in parking lots, or in remote staging areas outside the line of sight of fixed surveillance systems.

In some cases, law enforcement helicopters can be deployed to monitor key traffic corridors, providing immediate insight into developing traffic bottlenecks, lane blockages, or unauthorized vehicle activity. These airborne assets can relay critical information back to the command center, allowing ground teams to quickly dispatch traffic control officers, tow trucks, or emergency responders as needed to maintain flow and safety.

Some airports have explored the use of drones or tethered drones for aerial surveillance as a cost-effective alternative to helicopters. These devices offer greater flexibility and can be rapidly deployed to monitor high-priority areas such as overflow parking lots, perimeter roads, or construction zones where fixed camera coverage is limited or absent. However, due to the sensitivity of airspace around airports, all drone operations must be closely coordinated with air traffic control and comply with FAA regulations. Depending on the scope of the operation, prior approval from the TSA FSD may be required.

PARAS 0012: *Guidance for Integrating Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) into Airport Security* provides guidance on how airports can incorporate UAS into their security programs, outlining both the operational benefits and the necessary procedures for safe and effective integration.

5.7.6 Alternate Transit

If the airport is connected to a city rail system or has other robust public transportation links (e.g., metro, commuter train, dedicated express bus), encouraging event attendees to use these options can significantly reduce roadway congestion and curbside crowding; even a moderate percentage shift of

passengers using alternate transit methods can greatly relieve congestion on the roadways and curbsides. The airport's PIO plays a key role in this effort, working in tandem with transit agencies to share the message to use public transportation.

In the lead-up to the event, the airport can actively promote the use of public transit to and from the airport. This can be done by emphasizing the advantages (e.g., avoiding parking hassles, bypassing traffic, taking a faster route downtown) and by providing key information and relevant public transit links on the airport's main website or event-specific webpage and social media platforms. The airport can also work with event organizers to include transit information in attendee materials and messaging. With early coordination with the city or transit agency, the airport can often arrange for event-themed signage deployed at key points. During the event, the airport's social media and mobile application should push real-time updates about delays or complications with public transit service connecting to the airport.

Public transit providers may also bolster service during the event by increasing the frequency of airport stops or using larger capacity vehicles during peak airport travel times. If the airport has extended operating hours to accommodate earlier or later flights, the transit agency may also extend hours or schedule additional trips to support the flights.

5.7.7 Rental Cars

Major events can significantly increase rental car demand, leading to larger volumes of vehicle traffic at the terminal. This surge may cause congestion along airport access roads and in ground transportation zones.

To minimize these impacts, airports can coordinate with on-airport rental car companies in advance to identify peak demand periods and make operational adjustments. This may include pre-designating temporary overflow areas for staging increased rental vehicle inventory and adjusting vehicle delivery times and routes to avoid peak passenger flows.

5.8 Airfield Management

While the terminal committees manage passenger-facing issues, airside operations will be under equal pressure. Increased arrival and departure rates during a major event require careful choreography of operations on runways, taxiways, gates, and aprons. Proactive planning and real-time coordination are essential to handle the influx of private jets, charter flights, and fuller-than-usual scheduled flights while also managing increased commercial airline operations.

5.8.1 Aircraft Arrivals and Departures

During major events, the influx of GA and charter aircraft can overwhelm both airspace and on-ground capacity at host airports. To mitigate these challenges and ensure safe, orderly operations, airports and the FAA often implement reservation systems to control traffic flow.

Prior Permission Required (PPR) programs are administered directly by airports or FBOs to manage limited ground resources during periods of high demand. These systems are typically used when ramp space, fuel availability, and staffing are constrained. Pilots are directed to contact the airport or FBO in advance, often through phone, email, or an online portal, to request approval for arrival or parking. Approval is contingent on local capacity and operational considerations.

PPRs are enforced by airport or FBO personnel; while there are no FAA penalties for noncompliance, arriving without permission may result in being denied access, relocated, or refused service. Because each airport may implement different procedures, PPR systems can vary widely in structure and enforcement.

Special Traffic Management Programs (STMP) are operated by the FAA to manage airspace capacity during events that significantly increase GA traffic. Unlike PPRs, STMPs focus on airspace and ATC workload rather than ground capacity. These programs are typically deployed in locations with seasonal or event-driven air traffic congestion and provide a standardized, FAA-managed mechanism for balancing air traffic demand with available ATC and runway resources.

Under an STMP, pilots are required to reserve an arrival or departure slot through the FAA's Electronic Controlled Visibility Reservation System, and must include their confirmation number in the flight plan.[8] These programs are federally enforced, and failure to comply can result in flight delays, diversions, or regulatory consequences.

Together, PPR and STMP systems offer complementary strategies for maintaining operational control during periods of increased GA activity. By leveraging these tools, airports can reduce congestion risks, allocate limited ramp space more efficiently, and ensure safer, more predictable GA operations.

Use of a "free flow" departure system allows outbound GA flights to queue up and depart as soon as they are ready, rather than at assigned departure times. This approach can significantly increase departure throughput, clearing large numbers of aircraft immediately after the event or on Departure Day without cumbersome scheduling.

Combining an arrival slot program with free-flow departures is effective for maximizing aircraft capacity by metering arriving aircraft but allowing departing aircraft to leave as soon as they are ready. By actively managing the arrival/departure flow and having traffic management tools in place, the airport can avoid gridlock on runways or apron areas at critical times.

Events that increase helicopter traffic (e.g., VIP heli-transfers, news coverage, medical response) may require designated helicopter landing zones or temporary helipads. These areas should be clearly marked, secured from unauthorized access, and coordinated with security and ground operations.

TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS

TFR around certain events can disrupt airspace operations for a short period of time. TFRs are airspace restrictions established by the FAA for security, safety, or disaster response purposes. TFRs are commonly issued for V/POTUS movements; NSSEs; disaster response or recovery (e.g., wildfire suppression, hurricane response); airshows, space operations, or hazardous operations; and major sporting events or VIP visits that have been designated by federal security agencies.

A TFR may impose a variety of limitations depending on the nature of the event or threat. These can include prohibiting certain flight types entirely (e.g., GA, drones, banner tows) and restricting visual flight rules operations within a defined radius. Instrument flight rules traffic may be subject to special routing or coordination requirements. In some cases, the TFR requires that GA aircraft and their passengers undergo security screening prior to arrival or departure.

[8] https://www.fly.faa.gov/ecvrs/index.html

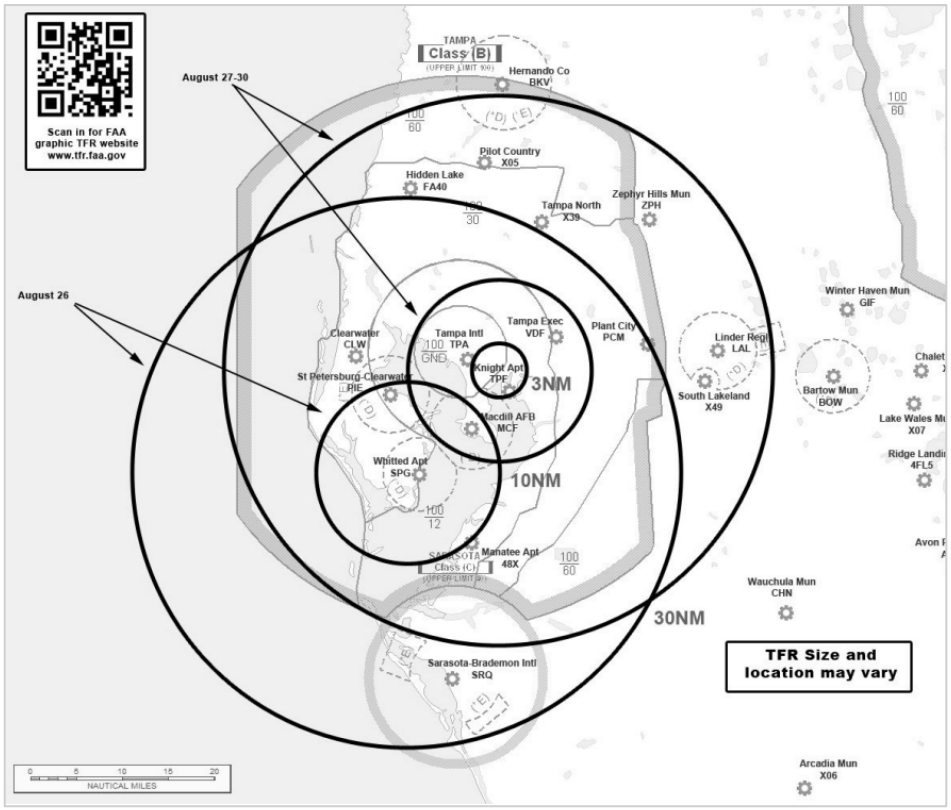
TFRs may also establish specific entry and exit procedures for aircraft operating near or within the restricted zone, and may direct aircraft to avoid or divert from certain airports altogether. Many TFRs include concentric security ring structures to designate no-fly zones and areas with additional restrictions or coordination requirements.

In some instances, the airport may fall within the restricted airspace designated in the TFR, which may halt or restrict operations for a much longer period. Airports within TFR boundaries may face:

- Ground stops or closures (often before and after VIP arrival/departure)
- Rerouting of commercial or GA flights
- Increased coordination with FAA ATC, TSA, and law enforcement
- Delays or diversions, especially for unscheduled or charter aircraft
- Limitations on drone or UAS operations in the surrounding area
- Additional security protocols for GA operators (e.g., TSA waiver, FBO screening)

Figure 6 shows an example of the rings of restricted airspace overlapping the St. Petersburg and Tampa airports during the 2012 RNC.

Figure 6. 2012 RNC Flight Advisory



Source: FAA Flight Advisory, 20 July 2012

TFRs are time-bound and publicly published through the FAA's NOTAM system, but the notice period can be very short, sometimes less than 24 hours for V/POTUS or short-notice dignitary movements. As a result, airports should closely monitor NOTAMs and maintain active communication with air traffic and security partners during major event windows. The impact of TFRs on air traffic management should be considered when developing the event aircraft traffic management plan.

5.8.2 Aircraft Parking

Managing aircraft parking can easily become one of the most pressing challenges on the airside during locally hosted major events. Many arriving aircraft dropping off event attendees also expect and require parking for several hours or multiple days.

Clear and consistent communication with pilots and FBO staff prior to arrival is essential to ensure compliance with assigned parking positions, especially in busy or unfamiliar environments.

PLANNING AND PREPARING AIRCRAFT PARKING AREAS

Early evaluation of available ramp and remain overnight (RON) aircraft parking space will help the airport refine the aircraft parking management plan. This includes assessing whether the primary FBO ramps, aprons, and designated parking areas have sufficient capacity for the anticipated aircraft volume.

When demand exceeds available space, airports may need to establish overflow aircraft parking. Common overflow strategies include:

- Converting seldom-used taxiways or closed runways into temporary parking stands
- Using other paved areas of the airfield, provided they meet weight-bearing requirements for the expected aircraft types
- Utilizing hangar aprons or de-icing pads for short-term parking when not required for their primary use
- Towing aircraft to remote parking areas, such as far corners of the airfield or less-trafficked cargo ramps
- Temporarily using military or tenant-operated ramps, with coordination and approval
- Designating grass or gravel areas (for light aircraft only), provided ground conditions allow safe operations and foreign object damage risks are managed
- Using areas near maintenance facilities or unused sections of cargo ramps, depending on available space and operational restrictions

Effective coordination with airport operations, airfield maintenance, and security teams is essential when preparing overflow or remote aircraft parking areas for major events. To support safe operations, these teams should ensure all designated overflow areas are properly marked and lit, with adequate lighting levels for both aircraft movement and nighttime security monitoring. Airfield maintenance personnel should verify that pavement strength and weight-bearing capacity are suitable for the aircraft types expected, especially if larger or heavier aircraft may be directed to these areas.

Airports may need to deploy portable surveillance cameras or temporary CCTV towers to maintain visibility where gaps exist in the perimeter around remote parking areas. Controlling access to these remote zones is equally important, particularly if they are located near the perimeter fence or distant from the main terminal. Security measures may include restricting vehicle and personnel access, deploying additional law enforcement or security patrols, and assigning stationary posts to monitor sensitive aircraft (VIP, military, sensitive cargo), especially during overnight stays.

During one airshow event hosting the US Navy Blue Angels, an airport was asked to provide an armed guard overnight to secure the parked aircraft; this was handled by hiring off-duty police officers through the local FBO. These types of special assignments should be anticipated and planned as part of the security strategy.

It is important to recognize that not all requests can or should be accommodated, especially when security resources are already stretched thin by other event-related demands. In such cases, airports have the discretion to deny or redirect requests that would exceed available capacity. Where possible, alternative solutions may include the use of private security personnel, secured hangars with access control or alarms, or recommending that the requesting party deploy its own security personnel. Establishing clear policies and communicating expectations early in the planning process can help prevent last-minute demands from disrupting overall event security operations.

The FAA's CertAlert 20-02 *Temporary Parking of Overflow Aircraft* provides guidance for airport operators on safely accommodating excess aircraft during periods of reduced flight operations, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The document emphasizes prioritizing the use of existing gates, ramps, and aprons for parking and advises against utilizing runways unless absolutely necessary due to the increased risk of runway incursions. The FAA advises that any temporary parking arrangements should have defined start and end dates.

The CertAlert also recommends forming a committee comprising key stakeholders (airlines, FBOs, ATC, and emergency services) to develop a comprehensive parking plan. This plan should address factors such as maintaining clear taxi routes, ensuring adequate ARFF response times, and implementing appropriate signage and NOTAMs for any non-standard parking areas.

For detailed information and specific recommendations, refer to the full FAA CertAlert 20-02.

AIRCRAFT PARKING ASSIGNMENTS AND PRIORITIZATION

Pre-assigning aircraft parking positions is an effective strategy for managing a high volume of parked aircraft during major events. Assigning parking in advance helps prevent confusion on the ramp, minimizes arrival delays, and allows ground crews to quickly guide aircraft to their designated locations with minimal congestion or miscommunication.

Aircraft parking assignments can be managed using a variety of tools, including windshield placards distributed to arriving aircraft, digital parking maps accessible to ground handlers, or coordinated instructions relayed through ramp controllers and marshalers.

Even with a reservation system in place, event operations often involve unplanned or late-arriving aircraft. Establishing policies in advance for handling these situations provides clarity for both ground crews and pilots. Airports may elect to:

- Direct unscheduled arrivals to a designated overflow area
- Accommodate unscheduled arrivals on a first-come, first-served basis in any remaining available space
- Turn away aircraft entirely if safety or operational limits have been reached

Clearly communicating these policies to the FBO community, ATC, and the event's key stakeholders ahead of time can help reduce friction during peak periods.

Parking prioritization is another important element of event planning, particularly when ramp space is limited. Airports may designate priority parking for specific categories of aircraft, including:

- Heads of state or other government officials
- Aircraft supporting emergency services or critical event operations
- Primary sponsors, dignitaries, or high-profile event participants

One airport managing a major international event reserved its primary ramp overnight exclusively for heads-of-state aircraft, requiring all supporting aircraft (media, staff, and other charter operations) to park at alternate airports after drop-off. This strategy helped ensure that limited parking remained available for the event's most critical air traffic.

Developing detailed aircraft parking layout maps is an essential component of aircraft parking planning. These layouts typically incorporate aerial photography, GIS mapping, or site diagrams to help identify every viable parking position on the airfield. More detailed maps allow ramp controllers, ground crews, and marshalers to execute the plan with greater accuracy.

One airport shared its approach to preparing for an event that would bring a significant number of RON aircraft to the airfield. To support parking coordination, the airport's GIS team captured aerial imagery of all available parking areas, including taxiways and runways that were being temporarily converted into aircraft parking for the event. Using these images, the team developed a large-scale parking map of the airfield, which served as the foundation for an interactive planning tool.

The planning tool allowed airport operations staff to visually track and assign aircraft parking locations in real time. It also provided space to record key flight details, such as scheduled arrival and departure times, aircraft type, and assigned parking positions. The interactive map became a critical resource during the event, enabling the airfield team to efficiently manage hardstand assignments, anticipate ground movement needs, and maintain situational awareness across a highly dynamic ramp environment.

When designing the parking layout, airports can use aircraft reservation data to match each aircraft to an appropriate space based on its size, wingspan, and required clearances. However, it is common for attendees to request last-minute aircraft substitutions, often upgauging to larger jets to accommodate more passengers or to avoid multiple flights. Flexible plans designed with contingencies can greatly help in these scenarios, including reservation of a limited number of larger spots or designation of an area that can accommodate varying aircraft sizes.

LEVERAGING RELIEVER AIRPORTS

Reliever airports (e.g., nearby GA facilities, FBOs, or smaller airports) are most often used as temporary expanded aircraft parking locations for drop-and-go operations and overflow. Including reliever airport managers in pre-event planning provides valuable coordination opportunities that extend beyond basic parking logistics. These early discussions create a shared understanding of anticipated demand and operational expectations, helping to prevent miscommunication or capacity issues during the event. Including reliever airport managers in pre-event planning allows the airports to share traffic forecasts and discuss parking capacities, limitations, and restrictions that will affect the aircraft parking plan.

Establishing reliable communication channels between the primary airport operations center and reliever airports is critical for monitoring aircraft movements, managing return schedules for departing passengers, and responding quickly to any security or operational concerns that arise.

5.8.3 Ground Support Operations and Remain Overnight Aircraft Security

Effective ground support management during a major event requires planning for increased utilization, building in redundancy, and dynamically responding to changing conditions.

Ground handling capacity should be scaled up to match the increased flight operations. Augmenting ramp staff and equipment for baggage handling, aircraft marshaling, and turnaround servicing may require bringing in contract ground handlers, cross-utilizing staff from less busy shifts, or supplementing the supply of ground support equipment (e.g., aircraft tugs, fuel trucks). Airports will need to consider the procedures to allow outside personnel to temporarily support the event operations. These procedures must align with the ASP to provide authorization to access and work on the airfield, including short-term badge issuance, escorting procedures, etc.

Fueling operations play a critical role in managing event-driven air traffic, particularly when a large number of aircraft are expected to depart within a compressed time frame. Proactive coordination with fuel providers and FBO partners can ensure adequate supply and efficient service to facilitate rapid departures. Early planning efforts can include verifying that the airport's fuel farm has sufficient inventory to meet event demand, including contingency reserves for weather delays or aircraft upgauging.

Designating a specific ramp or portion of the airfield for quick-turn operations can streamline these efforts. By concentrating fast-turn aircraft in a single area, ground handling, fueling, lavatory servicing, and marshaling teams can work more efficiently, reducing movement around other parked aircraft and improving safety.

Depending on the anticipated volume of quick-turn or drop-and-go operations, additional fuel trucks specifically dedicated to event traffic may need to be positioned on the ramp. This ensures that fuel availability does not become a bottleneck during peak operations. For periods of concentrated departures, assigning a dedicated fuel crew or a large-capacity tanker truck to service quick-turn aircraft can dramatically improve turnaround times. These crews can focus exclusively on topping off aircraft rapidly without delaying other scheduled fueling operations elsewhere on the airfield.

Airports can work with FBOs to communicate fueling priorities and expectations to arriving pilots well in advance. Providing clear instructions on whether fueling will occur immediately after arrival, prior to departure, or only upon request helps reduce confusion and ensures resources are allocated efficiently across the airfield.

Airports may identify a need to coordinate additional security oversight in high-traffic fueling areas and RON aircraft parking areas. Fuel trucks and equipment should be staged in secure, controlled locations when not in use, and drivers should be briefed on any access control requirements, designated routes, or temporary restrictions in place for the event. RON aircraft, especially those parked in remote or low-visibility areas, may need additional surveillance (e.g., CCTV, increased monitoring/patrols) and strict control over who can approach and service RON aircraft.

5.8.4 Airfield Access and Gate Management

Events with a significant GA presence typically generate a corresponding increase in HVLs and buses needing access to the airfield, particularly at FBOs or remote GA hangars. Without careful management, this influx of vehicles can quickly create security vulnerabilities and operational bottlenecks. Common challenges include:

- Vehicles stacking along narrow access roads while waiting for passengers
- Limited FBO staff available to handle the volume of escort requests
- Increased risk of unscreened vehicles or individuals entering sensitive areas
- Requests for airfield access by dignitary or VIP motorcades

To mitigate these challenges, airports can establish a designated staging area for HVLs and charter buses at a nearby vehicle gate where drivers can wait without blocking access roads or crowding airside entry points. This area can also serve as a convenient location for conducting vehicle inspections, verifying driver credentials, and matching vehicles with arriving flights.

One interviewed airport successfully implemented a strategy that paired vehicles with arriving flights before entering the airside. The airport designated an employee parking lot near cargo operations as a temporary HVL staging area. Drivers were instructed to report to the lot where operations staff matched each vehicle to an inbound flight. Once the corresponding aircraft landed, the vehicle was issued an escort placard and assigned a pilot escort vehicle to the GA hangar. This system maintained security oversight, minimized congestion, and prevented unauthorized vehicles from loitering near hangars or access gates.

Escorts are critical to maintaining control of vehicles allowed airside to ensure they do not deviate from approved routes. Pilot vehicles or operations staff can lead HVLs directly to their assigned aircraft, supervise passenger pick-up, and then escort the vehicle back to the public road.

One airport successfully used windshield placards to streamline passenger shuttling to GA hangars. These placards were created for each arriving aircraft and included essential details such as the assigned parking location, pilot and passenger names, and any required services (e.g., maintenance). By displaying this information prominently on the aircraft or associated vehicles, FBO and ground handling staff could efficiently escort passengers or support vehicles to the correct location without needing to reference tail numbers, a process that can be time-consuming and prone to error in a crowded ramp environment.

Some airports may prohibit HVL access to the airside, instead relying on FBO or airport staff to shuttle passengers landside to their waiting vehicles. While resource-intensive, this approach simplifies security management by limiting the number of unfamiliar or third-party vehicles on the airfield.

During peak event periods, airports may need to use remote aircraft parking stands on the airfield, requiring the use of buses to transport passengers between their aircraft and the terminal. To ensure both operational efficiency and security, airports can:

- Pre-position airside buses, stairs, and ground handling equipment.
- Inspect any additional buses brought in from off-airport in compliance with TSA security requirements before granting them airfield access.
- Assign escorts or spotters to supervise bus movements and ensure they remain on designated routes.
- Consider staging buses in secure areas when not in active use to prevent tampering or unauthorized access.

Airports may also consider processing information for dignitary motorcades in advance to streamline inspection procedures and avoid delays.

These measures help maintain secure, efficient passenger transfers in remote parking operations and reduce the risk of operational delays or security breaches during high-traffic periods.

5.9 Recovery and Transitional Planning Activities

Once the event concludes, airport operations begin the transition back to normal. The larger and more complex the event is, the more effort will be required to decommission temporary operations, restore facilities, and reset the airport environment back to normal operations. Building recovery and transitional planning into the initial event strategy ensures that restoration efforts are efficient, coordinated, and do not interfere with ongoing operations.

5.9.1 Recovery Planning Activities

Recovery planning identifies what will be changed, added, or suspended for the event and creates a plan to reverse those modifications in a systematic and safe manner. Elements of the recovery phase may include:

- Removing or resetting temporary barriers, signage, or queuing layouts deployed for the event
- Decommissioning temporary facilities, such as mobile kiosks, pop-up check-in counters, or off-site bag-drop locations
- Collecting temporary equipment, such as additional radios, magnetometers, mobile lighting and camera units, or portable fencing
- Restoring security infrastructure, including repositioning CCTV views and confirming perimeter boundaries and integrity
- Reclaiming TDY or event-specific airport badges and credentials, including disabling badge access in the system and physically collecting all returned badges
- Reversing any changes made to airport layouts, such as temporary parking zones, road closures, or reconfigured terminal spaces
- Notifying TSA of the intent to rescind Changed Conditions or terminate Alternative Measures, and restoring the original access controls, perimeter and boundary configurations, and other affected security measures described in the approved ASP

Where practical, demobilization tasks can be staggered so long as they do not affect ongoing operations and comply with the timelines approved by TSA for modifications to security measures. Allocating sufficient labor and time for this teardown phase is necessary to ensure critical tasks are not overlooked. Designating a special resumption committee or recovery team for this task can support recovery planning and restarting normal operations quickly.

5.9.2 Transitional Operations

Some airports, particularly those in large or event-heavy cities, may face scenarios where major events overlap, or one major event concludes just as another begins. Peak seasonal travel periods can force airports to transition directly from event mode into peak operations without pause. These tight operational windows leave little room for traditional recovery efforts, and instead require the airport to operate in a hybrid state, recovering from one event while simultaneously preparing for the next.

In November 2012, AUS hosted a Formula 1 race and then had to switch immediately into Thanksgiving travel operations the very next day. With virtually no "reset" period, staff who had managed the race crowds went straight into managing holiday passenger loads, and event signage was swapped out for holiday messaging overnight.

There are several security and operational considerations that airports may need to address when planning for back-to-back or closely sequenced events, including:

- Pre-planning signage changeover procedures that ensure materials for the next operational phase (e.g., holiday messaging) are printed and ready in advance
- Resetting event-specific queue configurations to support the next passenger flow strategy
- Pre-positioning equipment or materials (e.g., temporary barriers, additional queue stanchions) needed in the next phase of operations for rapid deployment
- Coordinating with tenants and airlines so all stakeholders understand the transition timeline and operational expectations
- Scheduling an interim planning meeting between events to debrief on significant incidents, capture lessons learned, and confirm plans for the next event

This kind of scenario can strain personnel and resources, particularly when operational teams, security personnel, or customer service staff have been working extended shifts or overtime across a long period of time. An effective recovery plan intentionally includes measures to provide staff rest and reset wherever possible, including scheduling built-in days off or reduced hours for critical personnel immediately following the event, and planning shift rotations that allow operational continuity while providing recovery periods.

5.10 Contingency Planning

Major events and periods of elevated demand create unusual operational conditions for airports that often introduce new security challenges. Large crowds, elevated threat conditions, and atypical operational demands can quickly strain or disrupt normal airport procedures. Proactively identifying potential challenges and developing flexible, security-focused response strategies ensures the airport can maintain safe operations even when unexpected situations arise.

Effective contingency planning enables an airport to continue secure operations even under unusual or constrained conditions. Security contingency planning ensures:

- Access controls are preserved or adapted, often using alternative methods (e.g., staff or K-9 resources vs. technology)
- Movement of passengers, personnel, baggage, vehicles, and aircraft remains controlled and monitored
- Security screening and badging protocols remain effective despite operational changes
- Temporary conditions (e.g., pop-up facilities, modified vehicle access, temporary perimeters) are actively managed with security-specific solutions
- Recovery and decommissioning activities restore the full security posture once normal operations resume

Reviewing AARs from previous events, analyzing operational data, and conducting tabletop exercises are valuable tools for identifying potential vulnerabilities and gaps, testing assumptions, and refining contingency procedures in advance. Any contingency plan should consider how large crowds, restricted access points, or atypical operations may require deviations from standard protocols.

Airports can take several planning approaches for managing contingencies during major events. Common approaches among airports include:

- Development of event-specific contingency plans to address unique risks or known operational impacts, such as unexpected protests or demonstrations, aircraft overflow parking limitations, alternate VIP routes, secondary staging areas for fans or media, or sudden changes in ground transportation flow
- Reliance on the airport's established Airport Emergency Plan, ASP, terminal evacuation plan, and other security plans (e.g., perimeter breaches, suspicious items, active threat situations, or mass evacuation) to serve as the foundation for contingency response
- Establishment of pre-planning activation procedures for Unified Command (UC), Command Posts, Incident Command, Joint Operations Centers, and potential EOC activation to coordinate response operations; once activated, existing plans and pre-identified resources are used to respond to developing incidents

Regardless of the strategy used, effective and responsive contingency planning for major events is designed with flexibility in mind. Plans should provide clear guidance while allowing decision makers to adapt to real-time conditions.

PACE (Primary, Alternate, Contingency, Emergency) is a widely used planning model in military, emergency management, and business continuity contexts. While often applied to communications planning, it is designed to ensure resilient, layered planning for any essential function, including communication, security, and logistics. PACE can be applied to any critical function during a major event, including access control, ground transportation, and resource delivery.

PACE uses a hierarchical approach that identifies four tiers of capability for a critical task or system:

- **Primary:** The preferred and most reliable method or system under normal circumstances
- **Alternate:** A secondary method that is also reliable and readily available but not the first choice
- **Contingency:** A less convenient or less capable method used when both primary and alternate methods fail
- **Emergency:** The last resort method when all others fail, often improvised or limited in scope

The PACE model ensures redundancy, flexibility, and clarity in planning by establishing multiple backup systems to support operational continuity when disruptions occur. Its layered structure allows teams to quickly pivot between methods based on real-time conditions, reducing downtime and confusion.

Practicing and assigning each tier in advance also ensures all stakeholders understand what tools or processes to use and when to support faster, more coordinated responses. Pre-event briefings, security team walkthroughs, and tabletop exercises can ensure that all response personnel understand the contingency procedures, their roles within them, and any special considerations that differ from daily operations.

5.10.1 Weather Considerations

Weather remains one of the most unpredictable and operationally disruptive factors airports face during major events. While long-range forecasts can provide general expectations based on seasonal trends, precise weather conditions remain uncertain until just days or hours before an event. Airports hosting major events can benefit from integrating weather-related operational plans with security considerations, particularly when weather increases crowding, delays, or movement challenges across the airport environment.

It is common for airports to rely on their existing weather response plans rather than developing event-specific weather contingencies. However, major events can amplify the impacts of weather conditions, especially when combined with high passenger volumes, large crowds in public areas, or a surge in aircraft activity. In these circumstances, weather-related disruptions may directly affect security operations by increasing congestion, altering access control measures, or requiring more personnel to manage public behavior.

5.10.2 Equipment or System Failures

Major events increase strain on airport infrastructure, occasionally requiring contingency plans to ensure critical systems and equipment operate throughout the event without interruption. Equipment or system failures during these periods can have immediate operational and security impacts by disrupting passenger flow, delaying screening processes, or degrading situational awareness.

Well-developed contingency plans for critical system failures often leverage existing emergency procedures, but should also reflect the heightened demands and complexities of major event operations.

Robust contingency planning for equipment and system failures ensures that airports can maintain operational continuity and security oversight if key technologies go offline. Pre-identifying backup procedures, manual workarounds, and resource needs for these critical systems helps minimize downtime and supports a faster, more coordinated response during high-demand events.

SECTION 6: STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC EVENT TYPES

Successfully managing high-profile visits and public demonstrations requires airports to anticipate both routine and risks factors. Strategic pre-event planning, interagency coordination, and the development of clearly defined processes help safeguard the airport's critical operations and infrastructure.

6.1 Presidential, Dignitary, and VIP Visits

Locally hosted major events frequently attract dignitaries, celebrities, government officials, and sometimes the V/POTUS. These visits introduce significant operational and security considerations for airports, especially given the high-profile nature of the individuals involved and the federal agencies providing protection.

6.1.1 V/POTUS and Dignitary Visits

Air Force One and Air Force Two typically operate from military bases for official state business, but non-governmental travel (e.g., campaign appearances or personal trips) may require arrivals at commercial airports.

V/POTUS visits are characterized by extensive security operations and significant airspace impacts. The FAA typically issues TFRs surrounding Air Force One and Two arrivals and departures, often requiring a complete ground stop of commercial flights at the airport for a predetermined period before and after movement.

On the ground, federal security presence is highly visible and comprehensive. Protection details often include armed motorcades, SWAT teams, counter-sniper elements, and security sweeps coordinated by the Secret Service in partnership with local, state, and federal law enforcement.

Airports can minimize disputes by focusing on the shared objectives of safety and security rather than procedural rigidity when discussing security capabilities.

6.1.2 Other High-Profile VIP Visits

Airports may also be tasked with supporting security operations for presidential candidates and other political figures. These individuals often receive enhanced security protocols due to their status or existing federal protection. It should be noted that all presidential candidate visits have adopted heightened security practices following the attempted assassination of President Trump in July 2024.

Most airports rely on FBOs to handle low-level VIPs; however, event surges may exceed their staffing capacity. To support VIP escorting, airports can:

- Augment escort capabilities with operations or security staff
- Maintain a pool of trained personnel ready to support unplanned escort requests
- Coordinate escort routes in advance to avoid sensitive areas or crowd congestion

Supporting high-profile political visits during major events requires flexibility, coordination, and an understanding of evolving security expectations. By supplementing FBO capacity and proactively preparing escort resources and routing plans, airports can help ensure safe, discreet, and efficient movements for VIPs amid heightened security postures and surging event demands.

6.1.3 Coordination with Federal Partners

Events involving V/POTUS or other federal protectees will require close collaboration with multiple federal law enforcement agencies, such as US Secret Service, Capitol Police, FBI, and TSA VIPR teams.

Federal agency-led operations can have high demands on airport security resources, particularly for airports with smaller law enforcement or operations teams. These demands may include extensive support requests from federal agencies, such as:

- Joint training exercises or site visits
- Additional security sweeps of terminal and airfield areas
- Armed escorts and mobile security support
- Increased patrol coverage at sensitive locations
- Background vetting of personnel assigned to dignitary operations

Some V/POTUS visits may involve unusual surveillance requests, requirements, or restrictions. Federal agencies have been known to request FBOs or tenants disable specific cameras and video feeds during sensitive operations or covering motorcade routes or aircraft operations. Communicating these expectations to affected stakeholders well in advance prevents confusion and ensures compliance without compromising overall surveillance integrity. The Secret Service frequently emphasizes drone prevention and counter-UAS measures during protective operations, particularly at events involving high-profile dignitaries or presidential movements.

Maintaining open and honest communication about available resources, setting clear expectations early in planning discussions, and remaining flexible to last-minute adjustments or additional federal requests can help mitigate challenges.

6.1.4 Tiered Security Classification System

The level of security for any VIP movement is heavily influenced by the individual's public profile, perceived threat level, and any intelligence gathered prior to the visit. To efficiently allocate resources, some airports have developed internal classification systems to categorize VIP visits and align security response levels, such as the example shown in Table 2. For high-traffic events such as APEC or major political summits, these classifications help prevent overextension of limited dignitary protection resources.

Table 2. Example of a Tiered Security Classification System

Security Level	Typical Individuals	Security Considerations
High	POTUS, V/POTUS, foreign heads of state	Full federal protection, extensive sweeps, armed escorts, access control, highest security posture
Medium	Foreign officials, professional sports teams, certain celebrities	Enhanced patrols, law enforcement escorts, increased surveillance, crowd management, location and routes out of public view
Low	Local officials, business leaders, minor celebrities	Escort support as needed, FBO responsibility, situational monitoring

Using a tiered system supports more deliberate resource allocation, helping law enforcement focus on true dignitary protection while airport operations staff or FBOs manage lower-risk VIP movements.

6.2 Protests and Demonstrations

Planned protests and demonstrations on airport property present a complex set of operational, legal, and security considerations. While these activities are a protected exercise of free speech, they also introduce security risks, potential operational disruptions, and challenges to maintaining the safe and orderly movement of people and vehicles through critical airport areas. Effective response requires a deliberate balance between three primary priorities:

- Protecting the public's rights
- Ensuring the safety of all participants, airport users, and staff
- Maintaining operational continuity and preventing disruption of secure areas or critical infrastructure

The scale of the planned protest, including the expected crowd size, location, duration, and nature of the demonstration, will directly shape the airport's response strategy.

6.2.1 Freedom of Speech Programs

Formalizing a Freedom of Speech program provides airports with a structured framework for accommodating constitutionally protected activity while minimizing security risks. The program should outline clear processes, expectations, and controls for both the protest organizers and airport staff. By outlining permissible activities and designated areas for demonstrations, these programs help mitigate risks, reduce disruptions, and protect the airport from potential legal liabilities associated with such events.

ACRP Legal Research Digest 26: *Regulations Affecting the Exercise of First Amendment Activities at Airports* is an excellent resource for airports interested in creating or enhancing their Freedom of Speech program.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Requiring groups to submit a permit application allows the airport to gather essential details to determine if the activity is authorized and to prepare for the event. Collected information should include size of group, intended activities, duration, contact information, and requested location. This information enables the airport to determine whether other concurrent activities at the airport may conflict with the protest, and supports operational planning, resource allocation, and law enforcement staffing decisions.

One benefit to the permitting process is that it allows the airport to review the conditions of the permit application and the permit organizer's event history for compliance issues, such as:

- Patterns of non-compliance with permit conditions or legal orders
- Documented safety incidents (e.g., injuries, fire hazards)
- History of escalation (e.g., physical altercations, vandalism, property damage)
- Prior interactions with law enforcement (e.g., arrests, citations)
- Use of prohibited items (e.g., pyrotechnics, drones)

This review, which should be conducted in collaboration with the airport's legal council, can inform planning decisions, such as whether to:

- Increase law enforcement or crowd management staffing
- Place specific limitations on protest duration, location, or size
- Require organizers to sign a formal agreement acknowledging airport restrictions
- Deny the permit if the group presents a consistent and credible risk to safety or security

Documenting this due diligence also supports transparency and helps justify the airport's decisions in the event of legal or public scrutiny.

The permit process also allows the airport to proactively engage with protest organizers. This can significantly reduce misunderstandings, improve compliance, and support a more peaceful and orderly event. As soon as a permit application is submitted, or when the airport becomes aware of a likely demonstration, airport law enforcement or designated liaisons can initiate outreach to leadership in order to:

- **Clarify legal boundaries:** Walk protest leaders through the airport's Freedom of Speech policy, emphasizing designated locations, prohibited conduct, event duration, and escalation procedures
- **Review logistical expectations:** Confirm crowd size estimates, arrival time, duration, setup requirements (e.g., tables, signage), and disbandment plans
- **Share operational needs:** Explain security and operational concerns that may impact the demonstration, such as aircraft movements, traffic control needs, or proximity to secure areas, and other operational concerns with activities occurring at the same time
- **Outline escalation procedures:** Make protest leadership aware of how the airport will respond to violations or security concerns, including possible dispersal orders, citation, or arrest
- **Provide an airport point of contact:** Assign a liaison from airport law enforcement or operations who can communicate security and operational plans with organizers in real time before and during the demonstration

This collaborative, front-loaded approach helps build mutual understanding, reinforces lawful protest boundaries, and creates an open communication channel that can be used to defuse tensions if challenges arise during the event, and prevent concerns and complaints from high profile officials arising pre- and post-event.

DESIGNATED LOCATIONS

Designating specific locations for protests or demonstrations is a critical strategy for balancing the constitutional right to free speech with the airport's responsibility to maintain safe, secure, and efficient operations. Clearly defined Freedom of Speech areas allow protest activity to occur in a controlled environment, minimizing operational disruptions and reducing security risks. Strategically selected protest zones help:

- Limit crowding near security-sensitive locations such as terminal entrances, security checkpoints, VIP routes, or baggage claim areas
- Reduce the risk of protestors unintentionally or intentionally encroaching into secure areas, airfield perimeters, or roadways critical for emergency access
- Enable law enforcement and security personnel to monitor and manage protest activity within an established, confined space

- Provide protestors with visibility to their intended audience without creating hazards for other airport users

Airports may establish designated protest areas indoors, outdoors, or both, depending on available space and operational considerations. Each location type presents unique advantages and limitations.

Indoor areas can be used during adverse weather and protestors are closer to the terminal, allowing terminal patrols to monitor the group. However, these spaces are much more constrained than outdoor areas, requiring greater crowd control efforts. Proximity to secure areas also increases the risk.

Outdoor areas offer more space for larger gatherings and generally have a lower operational impact on the airport. Use of the space will be highly dependent on weather and available shelter. Outdoor space may require additional barricades or traffic controls.

The physical size of the designated area directly informs how many participants can safely be accommodated without creating overcrowding or restricting movement. Larger outdoor spaces typically provide greater flexibility, while indoor spaces will naturally require stricter limits on crowd size to ensure that the activity does not impede or disrupt the airport's operations or life safety conditions. Establishing and enforcing crowd size limitations based on available square footage is a proactive measure that reduces the risk of safety incidents, stampedes, or accidental encroachment into secure areas.

Boundaries of the designated protest area need to be clearly defined and visibly marked using a combination of permanent and temporary fixtures. Using physical markers not only communicates the permitted boundaries to protestors but also enhances security by creating a physical deterrent to unintentional or intentional encroachment. This may include:

- Painted lines or floor markings
- Curbs, planters, or fixed barriers
- Movable bike racks or stanchions
- Concrete or water-filled barricades
- Snowplows, tugs, or other heavy equipment

Facilities management is often responsible for moving and stationing heavy equipment. Early coordination with these personnel, and any others necessary to move the equipment, can ensure the equipment and resources are available and functioning.

One interviewed airport reported coordinating with facilities management to activate the airport's sprinkler system as a deterrent when protestors attempted to move beyond the designated demonstration area. The use of environmental controls provided a non-confrontational method to discourage crowd movement into restricted or sensitive operational areas, while reinforcing established protest boundaries.

Including a detailed diagram of the approved permit area in the permit documentation provides law enforcement and the airport operator with a legal basis for enforcement actions if participants fail to comply with the conditions and boundary limits detailed in the permit approval documentation.

Ahead of a planned protest expected at an adjacent hotel property, one interviewed airport worked with local law enforcement to draft an operations plan stating that individuals stepping off hotel property into the adjacent roadway or onto airport property would be subject to arrest. The plan cited local and national case law to justify enforcement actions and was vetted by legal counsel in advance. The operational plan, including the case law excerpts, were provided to LEOs and airport staff monitoring and managing the protest activities.

Including case law and pre-approved language strengthens the enforceability of restrictions and gives officers the legal authority necessary when responding to potentially disruptive activity.

6.2.2 Crowd Monitoring

Effective crowd monitoring is a critical component of maintaining security and operational continuity during protests or demonstrations. Security personnel and law enforcement must be prepared to detect early indicators of security and safety risks, escalating tensions, or violations of permit terms while maintaining a measured and respectful posture that preserves the right to lawful assembly.

Multiple methods can be employed to monitor protests and demonstrations in real time, allowing security teams to identify potential issues early and respond appropriately:

- **CCTV:** Surveillance cameras positioned to cover designated protest areas and adjoining access points allow for continuous observation and documentation of crowd activity. Camera operators can monitor for signs of escalation, boundary encroachment, or confrontational or prohibited behavior.
- **Social media scanning:** Public social media platforms can provide useful indicators of protest intent, changes in location, or calls for crowd action. However, reliance on these platforms is increasingly limited as organizers shift to encrypted or private messaging services that are not readily accessible to airport authorities or law enforcement.
- **Body-worn cameras:** Equipping LEOs with body-worn cameras allows documentation of interactions and video capture of potential violations, and supports forensic investigation and accountability. When deployed in accordance with department policy and legal requirements, these devices provide an objective record of crowd behavior and officer response.

The visible stance and behavior of airport security and LEOs can directly influence the tone and behavior of the crowd. A posture that is perceived as overly aggressive or confrontational can inadvertently escalate tensions or provoke noncompliance. To support a peaceful atmosphere and reduce the risk of confrontation:

- **Deploy uniformed officers:** Tactical or riot gear should be reserved for scenarios where there is a credible and immediate risk of violence. For lawful, permitted protests, uniformed officers in standard patrol attire are sufficient and more likely to encourage order.
- **Leverage civilian security staff:** Customer service representatives or non-sworn personnel in soft uniforms (e.g., branded polos and khakis) can serve as the first point of contact for minor crowd issues, helping to de-escalate tensions and reinforce a welcoming, non-threatening presence.
- **Post clear signage:** Clear and visible signs outlining protest boundaries, behavioral conditions, and prohibited activities help reinforce compliance and reduce misunderstanding among participants.

Moving protests or marches present additional challenges due to the dynamic security and safety concerns. To mitigate these risks, airports can:

- Require protest organizers to specify intended routes in advance during the permit process
- Use law enforcement officers on bicycles or on foot to escort and monitor the group in real time
- Deploy crowd control personnel to manage vehicle and pedestrian interactions, especially near terminal roadways or airfield access points
- Pre-stage mobile barricades or signage at potential choke points or sensitive intersections

Mobile law enforcement escorts positioned alongside moving groups support rapid response to developing security concerns and help maintain order without unnecessarily restricting lawful protest activity.

A visible but measured law enforcement presence strikes the right balance between deterrence and respect for constitutional rights, supporting both airport security and community relations during high-profile or emotionally charged events.

PARAS 0013: *Managing Congestion in Public Areas to Mitigate Security Vulnerabilities* provides a discussion on crowd psychology and strategies that can be used to encourage compliance with instructions within a large group, such as during a protest or demonstration.

6.2.3 Unplanned Protests

Unplanned or "pop-up" protests present unique security challenges during major events. Unlike known or permitted demonstrations where organizers may coordinate with the airport and law enforcement in advance, unplanned protests emerge quickly, with little to no warning, and can disrupt airport operations or create security concerns during already irregular operations. Events most likely to attract unplanned protest activity include:

- Presidential visits and political rallies
- Celebrity or dignitary arrivals and departures
- Controversial or high-profile sporting or entertainment events
- Events associated with polarizing social or political issues

While not every event requires dedicated protest planning, airports can develop general contingency strategies to address unplanned demonstrations that focus on maintaining safe operations, minimizing disruption, and preserving secure movement for VIPs, airport personnel, and the traveling public.

ALTERNATE VIP MOVEMENT ROUTES

Unplanned protests, traffic congestion, or elevated threat conditions can severely disrupt standard vehicle movement routes at the airport. To reduce risk and maintain secure, uninterrupted transport for VIPs, airports can develop alternate ingress and egress routes tailored for dignitary movements.

Pre-identifying multiple movement routes for high-profile individuals should include a range of options based on severity, visibility, and proximity to public activity. These routes should be integrated into the overall security plan and coordinated with all relevant stakeholders. When identifying alternate routes, evaluate four PACE options:

- **Primary Route:** The preferred and most direct path from the VIP arrival point to their vehicle or destination under normal conditions.
- **Alternate Route:** A pre-planned secondary route to be used if the primary route becomes unusable due to traffic, media congestion, or minor protest activity.
- **Contingency Route:** A more discreet or circuitous route that maintains operational integrity in the event of increased risk, such as heightened protest presence or media overflow. It may sacrifice speed for security, and it should be coordinated with law enforcement escorts.
- **Emergency Route:** A last-resort, high-security path that avoids public areas entirely using airside vehicle service roads, perimeter gates, or secured access points to rapidly extract the VIP in the event of an active threat, crowd surge, or other immediate danger.

One interviewed airport hosting a large delegation of domestic and foreign dignitaries encountered an unplanned protest blocking the roadway to the FBO. Law enforcement coordinated with the Secret Service to divert VIPs onto a secure runway access road, allowing their motorcade to exit the airfield from a remote gate on the opposite side of the airport, away from protestors.

Developing layered movement plans for VIPs ensures flexibility and operational control under rapidly changing conditions. By coordinating these options in advance with federal and local partners, airports can maintain dignitary safety, reduce exposure to crowds or disruptions, and preserve secure movement pathways.

FLEXIBLE CROWD MANAGEMENT PLANS

Flexible crowd management plans enable airports to maintain control over security-critical areas while allowing for lawful protest activity on airport property. Advanced planning, clear procedures, and the ability to rapidly deploy personnel and equipment are key to minimizing operational disruption and maintaining safety for all airport users during unplanned protests or demonstrations.

Flexible crowd management plans will include clear procedures for temporarily restricting access to sensitive or high-risk areas in response to unexpected protests or surging crowds. Methods to support this include:

- Pre-positioned and easily deployable equipment to support flexible crowd management including:
  - Retractable stanchions, portable fencing, water-filled barriers, large vehicles, etc. to control the protest boundaries
  - Megaphones and handheld signage to communicate with the crowd
  - High-visibility vests or clothing for designated protest liaisons or safety officers
- Mobile signage indicating restricted areas or directing protestors to alternate locations
- Use of security staff, law enforcement, or operations personnel to act as physical deterrents and reinforce boundaries

A well-developed flexible crowd management plan ensures the airport can respond quickly and decisively to dynamic situations without escalating tensions or compromising security.

COMMUNICATION AND INTELLIGENCE SHARING

Strong partnerships with law enforcement and federal agencies, coupled with robust operational communications and real-time intelligence sharing, enable airports to maintain situational awareness and

deploy effective security responses that minimize disruption and protect airport operations. Effective communication frameworks allow airport operations, law enforcement, and security partners to quickly exchange information, assess emerging risks, and deploy appropriate resources to maintain safety and security across the airport environment.

Establishing and leveraging proactive intelligence- and information-sharing channels with local, state, and federal partners prior to the event can provide advance warning of planned demonstrations or emerging protest activity near the airport.

Airports may consider leveraging available technology to support intelligence sharing and real-time monitoring during events, including:

- Social media dashboards or keyword tracking tools to identify emerging threats or protest activity
- Geofencing alerts to monitor large gatherings near the airport
- Video analytics to track crowd density or detect unusual behaviors
- GIS-based mapping systems to track protest locations, road closures, or security post assignments

Proactive coordination with law enforcement and federal partners, supported by real-time intelligence tools, strengthens the airport's ability to detect and respond to unplanned protests and demonstrations.

6.3 Media and Fan Presence

Celebrity appearances, high-profile political visits, and the arrival of professional sports teams often attract intense media coverage and fan attention, creating potential security, crowd control, and operational challenges for the airport. These visits may require specialized planning to protect airport operations, uphold security standards, and ensure the safety of all parties involved. Proactive planning can minimize disruptions while maintaining appropriate access and visibility for media, fans, and airport stakeholders.

Establishing dedicated staging areas for fans and media can offer sufficient visibility to satisfy public interest while ensuring the group remains safely separated from critical passenger operations. In terminal environments, the meeter/greeter area is often the most suitable public-facing space. Staging areas should be clearly marked using temporary barriers and monitored by law enforcement or security staff.

When celebrities or other high-profile passengers travel on commercial flights, airports may choose to isolate them from the public while they await their flight to reduce the likelihood of crowd formation or operational interference. To support this approach, airports can:

- Hold the individual in a secure or quiet room until boarding
- Escort the individual through the public area and screening checkpoint
- Utilize a private or alternate checkpoint lane coordinated with TSA

Redirecting commercial flights carrying professional athletes or VIPs to a GA hangar or FBO can avoid disruptions at commercial gates, allow for quicker transitions to motorcade departure, and limit interaction with fans inside the terminal. These diversions require advance coordination with the airline, FAA, and ATC.

In select cases, press personnel may be given airside access to cover the arrival of a VIP at a GA facility or FBO. Given the security risks of bringing unbadged individuals onto the airfield, this strategy requires airports to:

- Coordinate with law enforcement and airport operations
- Enforce positive escort procedures at all times
- Screen all individuals and media equipment prior to access
- Inspect shuttles or busses transporting the media personnel prior to access

Heavy equipment, snowplows, baggage tugs, reinforced vehicles, or bike racks can be deployed to create physical boundaries between the crowd and secured areas. These provide both crowd control and a buffer zone to mitigate risk. Hangars may be reserved to provide shelter and help contain crowds in a defined, secure location, particularly in adverse weather conditions.

In some scenarios, the airport can request a temporary Changed Condition or Alternative Measure to revise the airfield boundary to exclude the media staging area from the regulated areas in order to accommodate controlled airside access without compromising the security perimeter.

Regardless of the strategy, strong coordination between law enforcement, TSA, airport security, operations staff, and tenant partners is essential to maintain security integrity during these high-visibility visits.

SECTION 7: POST-EVENT EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Conducting post-event evaluations is a critical component of airport event management, providing an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of operational plans, security measures, and coordination efforts during a locally hosted major event. These debriefings enable airports to capture lessons learned, identify gaps or challenges, and document best practices to enhance future event preparedness.

Post-event evaluations offer valuable insights by examining not only what went well, but also what operational challenges emerged, how unexpected situations were managed, and where improvements are needed. These insights are essential for refining future event planning, strengthening coordination across stakeholders, and improving security practices.

Ultimately, the purpose of post-event evaluations is to document what happened and drive continuous improvement. Incorporating lessons learned into future planning efforts enhances operational readiness, improves interagency coordination, and strengthens the airport's ability to safely and effectively manage future locally hosted major events.

Airports use a range of approaches to conduct post-event debriefings, depending on the scale, complexity, and outcomes of the event. Smaller or routine events (e.g., annual sporting events, popular concert) may only require a brief discussion or "hot wash" among internal staff to highlight lessons learned. In contrast, larger events or events that experienced significant operational or security challenges often warrant a more structured and detailed after-action review.

The goal of any debrief is to capture actionable feedback in a non-punitive manner while experiences are still fresh, creating a clear record of both successes and challenges to inform future planning.

Appendix E includes a checklist that can guide airports through the post-event debriefing and evaluation process.

HSEEP has an After-Action Meeting Template designed for tabletop exercises that can be modified for locally hosted major event debrief meetings.

7.1 Debrief Preparation

Debriefs should be scheduled as soon as practical after the airport returns to normal operations, ideally within a few days of Departure Day, to capture accurate details and avoid memory loss over time. Early debriefs also allow for faster implementation of improvements before lessons learned fade or staff rotate to other responsibilities.

Participation should include representatives from all key internal departments and, where appropriate, relevant external partners who participated in the event planning and execution. Typical participants may include:

- Airport security and operations
- Law enforcement
- Contract security
- Facilities and maintenance
- Emergency and risk management

- Airlines and ground handlers
- TSA, CBP, and other federal partners
- Ground transportation providers
- Tenant representatives
- Customer relations and experience teams
- Event organizers

To support a productive discussion, airports can request participants arrive at the debrief prepared with specific written examples of both successes and challenges observed during the event. This preparation helps avoid overly general feedback and ensures participants can provide detailed, concrete examples. Structured preparation also helps balance the conversation, ensuring both positive outcomes and improvement areas are captured.

Soliciting feedback from stakeholders, including the event passengers, can provide valuable insight into operational blind spots or coordination gaps. This feedback can be gathered before the debrief through surveys and questionnaires, interviews with individuals, informal discussions or interviews, and anonymous notes or comment cards. Examples of useful feedback topics include:

- Coordination between agencies or departments
- Operational pain points or bottlenecks
- Security challenges or vulnerabilities encountered
- Resource or staffing shortfalls
- Equipment or technology failures
- Communication successes or breakdowns
- Unexpected situations and corresponding contingency measures or workarounds that were effective

Capturing this information ensures the airport's evaluation process is holistic and accounts for all aspects of event operations.

While candid input is encouraged, feedback should be solution-oriented and focused on operational improvement. Less constructive feedback may include general complaints without context, unsubstantiated claims, or commentary that assigns blame to individuals or agencies. To maintain a productive tone, facilitators should redirect such feedback toward identifying root causes, highlighting systemic issues, and exploring actionable improvements.

7.2 Post-Event Evaluation

Structured post-event evaluations offer airports the opportunity to thoroughly analyze event performance, document lessons learned, and drive continuous improvement in future planning. The complexity and scale of the evaluation process will often depend on the size of the event, the level of disruption encountered, and the number of stakeholders involved in the process.

More formal evaluation activities allow airports to move beyond anecdotal observations and apply objective data to assess operational success and identify areas for improvement. Less structured debriefs may focus primarily on how unexpected challenges were handled and the strengths or weaknesses that affected response efforts.

7.2.1 Operational Data Review

Operational data review provides airports with an objective, quantifiable means of assessing performance during a locally hosted major event. By comparing actual operational metrics against pre-event forecasts, airports can identify areas where planning assumptions were accurate and where demand exceeded expectations or overwhelmed available resources. This process supports data-driven decision-making and helps refine forecasting models for future events, ensuring more accurate planning for staffing, resource allocation, and security needs.

Operational data review can provide meaningful insights into security operations and potential vulnerabilities, such as:

- **Overcrowding in unsecured areas:** Metrics showing excessive queuing outside terminals, in front of house areas, or at checkpoints can indicate a need for improved crowd control, temporary queuing areas, or expanded screening capacity.
- **Calls for service patterns and analysis:** Analyzing calls for security or law enforcement assistance that may reveal hotspots for unruly behavior, crowding, medical emergencies, or suspicious activity. Implementing a secondary call type in the record-keeping system to flag and track event-related service calls can enable more effective timeline analysis and post-event evaluation.
- **Resource strain indicators:** Data showing excessive response times or unfilled calls for assistance may indicate staffing shortages during peak periods.
- **Traffic and perimeter pressure points:** Reviewing ground transportation and airside access data can identify locations where security controls were tested or where overflow staging created vulnerabilities.

Operational data can come from a variety of airport systems and stakeholders. Metrics that are particularly valuable for post-event analysis include:

- **Airport operations systems:** Total passenger volumes, peak-hour passenger flow, aircraft operations, GA and charter traffic levels
- **Ground transportation systems:** Vehicle counts, taxi/rideshare activity, shuttle demand, curbside congestion periods
- **Law enforcement and security logs:** Calls for service, incident reports, arrest data, unruly passenger incidents, security breaches
- **Dispatch or Communication Center logs:** Volume and type of calls received, resource deployment frequency, escalations
- **TSA and security screening data:** Passenger throughput rates, wait times, secondary screening rates, prohibited items detected
- **CBP processing data:** International arrivals processing times, secondary screening rates, peak activity periods
- **Tenant or partner feedback:** Airline station manager reports, terminal congestion observations, baggage handling delays
- **Parking and landside operations data:** Lot occupancy rates, traffic backups, pedestrian movement patterns

Where possible, airports should document not only the raw data but also the operational context behind any deviations from the plan. This can reveal unusual root causes to operational challenges. The operational data review process should directly inform updates to future event plans, including:

- Staffing models and shift patterns for security, law enforcement, and operations teams
- Equipment needs such as additional barricades, portable lighting, signage, and radio units
- Refinement of resource deployment strategies including crowd control, vehicle screening, and access control
- Improved forecasting models for peak arrival and departure periods
- Reassessment of physical space for queuing, staging, and passenger movement
- Updates to contingency plans for transportation disruptions or service outages

By translating insights from operational data into targeted plan updates, airports can enhance preparedness, reduce risk, and improve the efficiency and resilience of future event operations. Continuous refinement based on real-world data ensures that staffing, equipment, and procedural strategies remain aligned with actual demand and evolving security needs.

7.2.2 Timeline Analysis

Timeline analysis involves reviewing the sequence and timing of incidents during event operations to identify delays, inefficiencies, and successful processes. By mapping out the timeline, the airport can better understand the flow of activities and pinpoint areas for improvement. This process is particularly valuable in identifying bottlenecks, miscommunications, and operational overlaps, such as:

- Resource constraints or overextension
- Critical delays or bottlenecks
- Response times to incidents or emergencies
- Operational overlaps or coordination gaps
- Areas where additional controls may have prevented incidents or improved flow

Developing a comprehensive event timeline requires capturing data from multiple sources. Airports can draw on a variety of systems and records to document key operational milestones and decision points:

- **CCTV footage:** Crowd behavior, queuing patterns, protest activity, checkpoint flow, traffic patterns, perimeter movements
- **Body-worn camera footage:** LEO perspectives on incidents, security checks, or interactions with the public
- **Radio traffic recordings:** Resource deployments, response times, command decisions
- **Dispatch system logs:** Incident creation times, unit assignments, clearance times, communication effectiveness, incident categorization
- **Access control logs:** Door activity, badge access records, restricted area entries
- **Mobile communication logs:** Text message alerts, notification system activations
- **Email and messaging threads:** Operational coordination, stakeholder communication records

ICS Form 214: *Activity Log* records significant events, activities, and decisions during the event.

Once compiled, the timeline should chart key phases of the event, including:

- Pre-event preparations and set-up
- Peak arrival or departure periods
- Incident responses or disruptions
- Law enforcement or security deployments
- Crowd management activities
- Post-event recovery and clean-up operations

After the timeline is established, evaluation teams can pinpoint moments of operational friction, such as:

- Delays in passenger screening
- Resource shortages
- Response lag to unruly passengers or calls for service
- Poor coordination during traffic congestion
- Extended wait times for ground transportation or baggage handling

A comprehensive timeline analysis provides valuable insight into the effectiveness and responsiveness of airport operations during major events. By mapping and reviewing the timing of critical activities airports can identify inefficiencies, validate successful procedures, and strengthen coordination for future events. This process supports continuous improvement and reinforces security readiness across all operational domains.

7.2.3 Incident Response Evaluation

Reviewing how anticipated and unexpected incidents were handled during the event provides valuable insight into the airport's preparedness, coordination, and decision-making under real-world conditions. Incident response evaluation focuses on identifying both strengths and gaps in response actions, resource allocation, communication, and interagency coordination.

Incident response evaluations should focus on asking targeted questions that identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement in how events were managed. These assessments often explore how well ICS structures supported coordination, whether resources were appropriately pre-positioned and deployed, and how response teams adapted to evolving conditions. They can be used to analyze the effectiveness of interagency communication, clarity of operational roles, and execution of response plans under real-world conditions. Incident response effectiveness can be assessed using the following criteria:

- Response time
- Communication effectiveness
- Resource deployment
- Incident containment
- Coordination effectiveness
- Continuity of operations

Evaluators may also review the adequacy of staff training, the quality and timing of public messaging, and the thoroughness of documentation practices. Collectively, these insights support informed revisions to response protocols and preparedness strategies for future events.

Incident response evaluations are most effective when supported by multiple sources of data and firsthand accounts. Reviewing surveillance footage and body-worn camera recordings provides visual and audio confirmation of actions taken, while dispatch and radio logs help reconstruct the timing and coordination of response efforts. Feedback from first responders can reveal operational challenges or successes not visible in documentation. Passenger or stakeholder complaints may highlight overlooked issues, and conducting timeline walkthroughs or structured interviews allows the airport to validate or clarify details. Cross-referencing ICS forms and incident logs further supports a comprehensive understanding of the event.

Together, these evaluation methods provide a well-rounded view of how incidents unfolded and how effectively they were managed. By combining objective data with personnel insights, airports can identify opportunities to refine procedures, improve coordination, and strengthen overall preparedness for future events.

7.3 Debrief Documentation

Documenting the findings, observations, and lessons learned from post-event debriefs and evaluations strengthens an airport's ability to prepare for and manage future locally hosted major events. A clear written record ensures institutional knowledge is captured, shared, and referenced over time, preventing the loss of valuable insights as time passes and personnel change.

Airports may choose to create a formal AAR, a summary memo, or an informal lessons learned log depending on the event complexity or size, the presence or absence of significant challenges or incidents, how often the airport hosts the event, available staffing resources to prepare extensive documentation, and the intended audience for the report (internal and/or external stakeholders).

Regardless of the reporting format selected, the documentation should capture both successes and shortcomings to inform future operational planning. Consistently documenting lessons learned ensures continuous improvement and provides a useful resource for future planning teams.

Assigning a clear owner for documenting the debrief is essential to ensure consistency and follow-through. Most commonly, this responsibility falls to Emergency or Risk Management, Airport Operations or Security, Airport Law Enforcement, or a designated event planning lead. This role or team is responsible for:

- Compiling feedback from all participating stakeholders and departments
- Documenting key discussion points from the debrief
- Drafting the summary document or AAR
- Circulating the document for review and input from stakeholders
- Maintaining the document in an accessible location for future use

HSEEP offers an After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR-IP) Template designed for tabletop exercises that can be modified for locally hosted major event debriefing.

7.4 Continuous Improvement Activities

Conducting a post-event debrief and documenting lessons learned ensures that operational gaps, security vulnerabilities, and process inefficiencies identified during one event directly inform planning for the next. Building a deliberate and structured approach for converting lessons learned into actionable tasks allows airports to enhance their readiness, strengthen stakeholder collaboration, and improve operational efficiency over time.

Continuous improvement activities build proficiency, resilience, institutional knowledge, and operational excellence over time. Each event provides an opportunity to refine practices, strengthen relationships between partners, and proactively prepare for future major events. Airports that consistently capture, evaluate, and act on lessons learned are better positioned to respond nimbly to evolving security threats, adapt to changes in passenger behavior or event trends, enhance stakeholder collaboration and trust, and increase operational efficiency.

Post-event evaluations often produce a wide variety of findings, ranging from immediate process gaps to long-term facility enhancements. Airports can use several strategies to ensure insights from the post-event evaluation lead to meaningful improvements, including:

- **Integrate findings into planning documents and playbooks:** Update event-specific SOPs, playbooks, checklists, and contingency plans to reflect lessons learned
- **Prioritize and assign improvement tasks:** Establish a prioritization framework to identify:
    - Changes that need to be implemented before the next major event
    - Tasks that require longer-term planning, funding, or approvals
    - Stakeholders or departments responsible for each task
- **Address staffing and resource gaps:** Adjust estimated staffing levels and resource needs in future event planning documents
- **Identify equipment and technology needs:** Highlight areas where technology can enhance efficiency or security to strengthen business cases or funding requests for improvements
- **Evaluate potential capital improvements:** Identify infrastructure deployed during events that could improve normal operations and inform future development priorities
- **Train and exercise on updated procedures:** Brief stakeholders on new processes well in advance of the next event
- **Encourage stakeholder-driven solutions:** Solicit recommendations from participating stakeholders to ensure solutions are practical and operationally realistic

Assigning ownership for improvement tasks creates accountability and ensures recommendations are not lost over time. An improvement tracking log or project management system can be used to monitor progress on assigned actions.

By formalizing this process and treating each major event as both a test and a learning opportunity, airports can create a sustainable cycle of growth, innovation, and preparedness.

SECTION 8: SUMMARY OF OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES

SECTION 2: KNOWLEDGE BUILDING	
Event Response Frameworks	• Leverage the ICS framework during event operations to manage increased demands. • Use plain language and consistent terminology to eliminate confusion in communications between agencies and disciplines. • Host regular operational briefings and meetings to discuss event operational plans, rehearse coordination procedures, assess progress, and evaluate resource demands and allocation. • Incorporate ICS forms into event planning to record, manage, and share critical operational information. • Create and promote reporting channels to encourage stakeholders to report suspicious activities or operational concerns. • Establish a UC and Command Post to provide on-scene leadership for incident response. • Activate the EOC to support the UC during extended or complex incidents.
Planning Exercises	• Develop planning exercises that incorporate event-specific elements to identify vulnerabilities and strengthen preparedness. • Partner with state emergency management agencies to develop customized airport-specific exercises.

SECTION 3: EVENT SCOPE OF IMPACT	
Past Event Evaluations	• Review past event assessments and benchmark with previous host airports to establish a baseline for planning expectations.
Demand Forecasting	• Forecast event demand to support more informed operational decision-making. • Prepare multiple forecasts to account for varying operational scenarios and incomplete data. • Assess how the type of event and its participants or attendees may impact airport operations. • Adjust operational plans based on expected passenger arrival and departure flow patterns throughout the event period. • Coordinate with event partners to collect and share data needed for accurate forecasting activities.
Capacity Assessments	• Perform capacity assessments of landside, terminal, and airside operations to determine necessary operational adjustments or improvements. • Update event reference materials (e.g., maps, diagrams) to reflect any changes to the physical layout of the airport.
Security Assessments	• Conduct threat and risk assessments to identify vulnerabilities and prioritize mitigation measures. • Collaborate with federal partners to plan and implement enhanced security measures during NSSEs and SEAR-rated events. • Walk the airport property with key security stakeholders to identify vulnerabilities and assess operational needs. • Liaise with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to gather intelligence on potential threats and disruptions.

SECTION 4: EVENT COORDINATION PLANNING	
Stakeholder Engagement Approaches	• Incorporate FEMA's Whole Community Approach and DHS's NECP framework into event planning to strengthen stakeholder engagement and communication.
Key Stakeholders	• Identify stakeholders from five main categories: Internal Airport Departments, Tenants and Service Providers, Local Stakeholders, Federal Agencies, and Event Leadership
Event Committees	• Establish interagency event committees and subcommittees organized by operational area. • Assign security or operations staff to participate in other committee meetings to share and discuss security plans.
Planning Schedule	• Initiate preliminary assessments as soon as the event location is confirmed. • Apply pre-established contingency plans and protocols to support events with short planning periods. • Conduct benchmarking activities with previous host airports as early as possible.
Meeting Frequency	• The frequency of event planning meetings will typically increase as the event draws closer. • Participation in early stages paves the way for more effective and efficient teamwork in later, more time-critical stages.
Stakeholder Communication and Coordination	• Promoting reporting channels before and during the event ensures that stakeholders know how to report suspicious activity, security concerns, or operational issues. • Using a variety of reporting technologies to support event security and operations monitoring provides flexible options. • Clear, consistent messaging on the reporting channels' availability increases awareness and participation, normalizes reporting, and builds a collective security culture • Compile contact lists with key stakeholder and backup personnel information. • Distribute contact lists to key stakeholders in multiple formats and store them in multiple secure locations. • Develop a notification decision tree to guide staff in determining when incident escalation is necessary. • Inventory radios and mobile phones early to identify any procurement needs. • Test and assign communication equipment well in advance of the event. • Leverage centralized communication hubs and virtual EOCs to expand coordination with local city resources. • Broadcast alerts and event updates to passengers and airport workers through PA systems, digital signage, and mass notification platforms. • Develop strategies to ensure external partners, such as subcontractors and third-party vendors, are included in planning activities

SECTION 5: STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL PLANNING	
Temporary Operations and Facilities	• Extend operating hours for all essential services to align with the airport's temporary event schedule. • Deploy additional patrols in public areas when terminals open prior to security checkpoints opening. • Coordinate with TSA to open additional checkpoints and screening lanes to expand throughput capacity. • Establish remote screening locations with TSA and CBP to process VIPs or large travel groups using charter or private flights, and stand up a temporary FIS for screening, as needed. • Augment ATC staffing with a mobile control tower to manage complex arrival and departure sequencing. • Draft and implement approved Changed Conditions and Alternative Measures to adjust security boundaries or security measures as needed for the event. • Compile stop and allow lists to support security adjustments made under Changed Conditions or Alternative Measures, ensuring only authorized personnel access secured areas.
Public Area Security	• Establish controlled entry points to manage access to the airport terminal building. • Ensure emergency exits remain available and compliant with fire codes during controlled entry scenarios. • Offer off-site or early check-in options to flatten peak demand and reduce front-of-house congestion. • Leverage check-in technologies to increase efficiency during high-demand periods • Establish remote baggage drop locations away from the terminal (e.g., event hotels, convention centers) or at key property locations (e.g., departure curbs, rental car facilities) to meter baggage volume into the terminal. • Relocate oversized baggage processing to a designated bag drop to minimize impacts on main check-in queues. • Encourage event passengers to arrive early to distribute check-in and baggage volumes across a broader time window. • Design queues using psychological principles of waiting to manage and control passenger flow. • Implement structured queuing strategies that can be dynamically adjusted during passenger surges. • Designate special queues for event passengers who require additional time or for express processing of passengers with shorter service needs. • Increase uniformed and plainclothes security patrols in baggage claim and rental car areas to deter threats and monitor crowds. • Deploy event volunteers and ambassadors to assist passengers, answer questions, and reinforce situational awareness in baggage claim and rental car areas. • Advise travel groups to send a single representative to collect baggage to reduce crowding at carousels. • Adjust carousel assignment strategies to create additional space between passenger groups. • Augment baggage handling staff to improve baggage delivery times during peak periods.

SECTION 5: STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL PLANNING	
	• Post LEOs or security personnel at oversized baggage doors to control access to secure screening areas. • Coordinate with rental car companies to secure counters, administrative offices, and customer information assets. • Increase estimated security staffing requirements by at least ten percent to ensure complete event coverage. • Prioritize high-visibility patrols throughout public areas to deter undesirable behaviors. • Assign LEOs from outside agencies to public area patrols to eliminate the need for additional badging. • Pair unbadged officers with badged LEOs to support patrols in the Sterile Area. • Partner with federal law enforcement agencies to augment visible deterrence efforts during peak event periods. • Review and activate partnering agreements to confirm the number of available support resources for the event. • Utilize event volunteers and airport ambassadors to assist passengers and strengthen situational awareness across airport operations. • Solicit additional event volunteers and ambassadors from non-key roles to assist in badged areas and critical passenger movement zones. • Provide volunteers and ambassadors with a pre-event briefing covering customer service expectations, airport layout, event schedules, safety protocols, and basic crowd management practices. • Deploy uniformed and plainclothes LEOs in congested areas to monitor crowd dynamics and adjust flow in real time.
Monitoring and Surveillance Technology	• Leverage facial recognition and video analytics to monitor multiple public spaces simultaneously and detect emerging issues. • Monitor passenger movements in baggage claim and rental car areas using video analytics to detect unattended baggage, passenger conflicts, and crowding.
Signage, Wayfinding, and Messaging	• Position event signage strategically throughout the airport to maximize passenger visibility and information retention. • Translate critical information into key event passenger languages to enhance accessibility and comprehension. • Integrate event logos, colors, fonts, and themed imagery to attract the attention of event attendees. • Publish event-specific information across social media platforms and the airport's website. • Create a dedicated webpage on the airport's website to consolidate all event information and resources in one accessible location. • Leverage passenger flow management systems to monitor queues and trigger alerts for overcrowding. • Focus surveillance cameras on checkpoint queues to verify congestion and support real-time monitoring. • Implement virtual queues at the security checkpoint to meter passenger flow during peak periods. • Supplement permanent checkpoint signage with temporary, multi-language signs tailored to event-specific security needs.

SECTION 5: STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL PLANNING	
Security Checkpoints and Screening Activities	• Confirm with TSA which security checkpoint lanes will remain operational during peak outbound periods. • Adjust law enforcement staffing to ensure checkpoint coverage and rapid response to screening alarms triggered by event souvenirs. • Post signage at key decision points to notify passengers to remove souvenirs likely to trigger screening equipment. • Use universal icons and images to highlight problematic souvenirs and capture passenger attention. • Coordinate with TSA to set up demonstration tables showcasing event souvenirs known to cause alarms. • Deploy amnesty boxes for passengers to dispose of illicit substances before entering the checkpoint queue. • Establish dedicated screening lanes for passengers requiring additional or specialized screening to maintain checkpoint throughput. • Collaborate with organized travel groups to conduct pre-checkpoint briefings and streamline screening efficiency. • Communicate anticipated wait times and checkpoint disruptions via monitors, the airport website, and social media platforms. • Coordinate with TSA to develop alternate screening strategies for oversized baggage and increased baggage volumes. • Arrange off-site baggage drop-off options or early check-in opportunities to stagger baggage volume. • Liaise with CBP early to determine FIS staffing and spatial requirements to handle increased international arrivals. • Ensure specialized handlers are available to safely and securely un/load valuable cargo (e.g., horses, race cars). • Discourage spectators from gathering at specialized cargo operations by using temporary barriers, signage, and security patrols. • Engage third-party canine cargo screening providers to augment cargo security and ensure coverage during peak periods.
Terminal Concessions and Services	• Facilitate the badging of TDY staff or escorts to support tenant upstaffing needs for the event. • Coordinate with vendors to adjust delivery schedules and avoid peak traffic periods on the airside and landside. • Encourage or establish temporary points of sale in high-traffic concession areas to alleviate long queues. • Enforce airport alcohol service policies in collaboration with security and concessionaires to mitigate overserving risks. • Increase the frequency of facility cleaning and trash removal to maintain sanitation and reduce security vulnerabilities. • Work with on-site medical providers or local EMS agencies to strengthen medical staffing and coverage during peak periods. • Deploy mobile EMS teams throughout the terminal to minimize response times and circumvent roadway congestion delays.
Vehicle Traffic Management	• Apply insights from event scoping activities to create a comprehensive traffic management plan. • Account for inbound and outbound traffic surges in the traffic management plan.

SECTION 5: STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL PLANNING	
	• Adjust traffic flow patterns using traffic control officers, signage, and traffic control measures (e.g., traffic signals, lane closures). • Establish clear communication and dispatch protocols between roadway staff, curbside monitors, and the dispatch center to enable faster responses. • Coordinate with city and state highway authorities to assist with traffic control and flow adjustments on connecting roadways. • Deploy traffic control officers to critical decision points and known chokepoints to minimize congestion and discourage unsafe driver behaviors. • Position traffic control officers strategically along roadways to maintain distributed readiness for rapid response. • Equip officers with resources needed to secure incident scenes and reroute traffic as necessary. • Utilize non-badged officers from partner agencies to staff public roadways and entrances. • Reroute large vehicles through separate traffic lanes to prevent congestion with general vehicle traffic. • Reserve curb space exclusively for large vehicles to accommodate extended loading and unloading times. • Designate staging areas for large vehicles to wait until passengers are ready to board, reducing curbside congestion. • Control access to the airport by implementing vehicle checkpoints staffed by LEOs. • Ensure emergency and first responder vehicles have designated access lanes or staging areas during periods of congestion. • Pre-position tow trucks to enable rapid clearance of disabled or obstructing vehicles and maintain roadway access. • Separate vehicle types at the curbside to improve flow and maximize un/loading efficiency. • Create designated zones for event passengers who require additional time to load/unload equipment or multiple passengers. • Enforce curbside dwell time limits through the use of traffic monitors, signage, surveillance systems, and tow trucks. • Manage split-curb operations with traffic control officers and signage to distribute vehicle traffic across both curbs during peak surges. • Leverage technology to monitor roadways for rapid dispatch from the operations center. • Encourage event passengers to utilize public transit to reduce the number of private vehicles at the airport. • Coordinate with rental car companies to manage additional vehicle deliveries and overflow parking needed to support event demand.
Airfield Management	• Leverage STMPs and PPR programs to maintain operational control of the airfield during increased GA flight activity. • Combine arrival slot programs with free-flow departures to maximize aircraft capacity and flexibility. • Incorporate TFR restrictions into airfield capacity planning efforts to minimize disruptions. • Establish a comprehensive aircraft parking plan that accounts for overflow parking operations.

SECTION 5: STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL PLANNING	
	• Ensure aircraft parking and RON areas are secured and monitored through surveillance systems or routine patrols. • Implement an aircraft parking prioritization system to ensure high-priority aircraft have reserved space. • Create detailed airfield maps to effectively assign and designate parking in viable locations. • Coordinate with neighboring reliever airports to absorb additional aircraft arrivals and parking when capacity is exceeded. • Augment ramp staff and ground support equipment to scale up ground handling capacity. • Support quick-turn and drop-and-go operations by designating specific ramp areas and pre-positioning fuel trucks. • Designate a staging location for HVLs and charter buses to wait for arriving passengers without obstructing vehicle gate access. • Utilize airport escorts and FBO staff to shuttle passengers to waiting vehicles and minimize unfamiliar vehicle traffic on the airfield.
Recovery and Transitional Planning Activities	• Integrate recovery and transitional activities into the pre-event planning process. • Stagger demobilization tasks to minimize disruption to normal airport operations. • Designate a resumption committee or recovery team to oversee event recovery activities. • Pre-position signage and equipment to expedite setup for sequential events. • Incorporate rest and recovery periods into transitional and recovery staffing plans to prevent personnel fatigue.
Contingency Planning	• Plan multiple flexible contingency operations and ensure stakeholders understand activation triggers and responsibilities. • Review contingency plans in the ASP and Airport Emergency Plan to ensure requisite knowledge. • Utilize the PACE model to develop layered contingency plans for major event operations. • Create layered security solutions to maintain control during adverse weather conditions. • Develop multiple redundancies for critical equipment and systems.

SECTION 6: STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC EVENT TYPES	
Presidential, Dignitary, and VIP Visits	• Coordinate closely with federal agencies to support V/POTUS and dignitary visits. • Allow FBO staff to escort VIPs with low threat risk to preserve law enforcement resources for higher-risk movements. • Maintain flexibility in responding to federal agency security requests during dignitary and VIP movement operations.
Protests and Demonstrations	• Develop a Freedom of Speech program to accommodate protected activities while maintaining airport security and operational continuity. • Require prior approval and a permit application with specific conditions for protests or demonstrations conducted on airport property.

SECTION 6: STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC EVENT TYPES	
	• Designate Freedom of Speech areas away from critical infrastructure and operationally sensitive locations. • Consult with legal counsel to review liability, case law, and options when preparing for protests or demonstrations. • Monitor protest activity using surveillance technology, uniformed and plainclothes LEOs, contract security, and airport personnel. • Deploy temporary barricades to protect participants and maintain boundaries around designated protest areas. • Prepare contingency operations for unplanned protests and demonstrations.
Media and Fan Presence	• Establish dedicated staging areas for fans and media to interact with VIPs without disrupting normal operations. • Isolate VIPs traveling commercially from other passengers to prevent crowd formation.

SECTION 7: POST-EVENT EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT PLANNING	
Debrief Preparation	• Schedule the debrief soon after the event to capture accurate details and minimize memory degradation. • Invite all stakeholders who participated in the event's planning and execution. • Request participants prepare written examples of successes and challenges encountered during the event. • Solicit feedback from stakeholders unable to attend the debrief activities.
Post-Event Evaluation	• Collect operational data from multiple sources and systems for review, analysis, and comparison against performance metrics. • Develop a timeline of decisions, resource deployments, and communications to identify operational friction points for improvement. • Review calls for service data to assess strengths and gaps in response actions, resource allocation, communication, and interagency coordination.
Debrief Documentation	• Document findings, observations, and lessons learned from post-event debriefs and evaluations in a formal AAR, summary memo, or informal log. • Assign responsibility for documentation to a specific individual or department to ensure consistency and follow-through.
Continuous Improvement Activities	• Integrate findings and lessons learned from post-event debriefs and evaluations into event planning documents, playbooks, and checklists for future events • Prioritize and assign improvement tasks to ensure critical findings and lessons learned are implemented. • Identify potential opportunities to improve future event operations through construction projects or infrastructure enhancements. • Brief stakeholders on new processes or remediations developed to address gaps or vulnerabilities. • Solicit solutions and recommendations from stakeholders to strengthen future event planning and execution.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	
Templates and Forms	Event Coordination Planning Resources: • ICS Form 201: *Incident Briefing* • ICS Form 203: *Organization Assignment List* • ICS Form 205: *Incident Radio Communications Plan* • ICS Form 205A: *Communications List* • ICS Form 215A: *Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis* • ICS Form 217A: *Communications Resource Availability Worksheet* Strategic and Tactical Planning Resources: • ICS Form 202: *Incident Objectives* • ICS Form 204: *Assignment List* • ICS Form 215: *Operational Planning Worksheet* Planning Exercises and Post-Event Evaluation Resources: • FEMA's HSEEP resources • State emergency management agencies • ICS Form 214: *Activity Log*
Relevant Research	• PARAS 0003: *Enhancing Communication & Collaboration Among Airport Stakeholders* • PARAS 0012: *Guidance for Integrating Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) into Airport Security* • PARAS 0013: *Managing Congestion in Public Areas to Mitigate Security Vulnerabilities* • PARAS 0032: *Enhancing Security of Cargo Operations at Airports* • PARAS 0034: *Optimization of Airport Security Camera Systems* • PARAS 0042: *Force Multiplier Strategies for Airport Law Enforcement* • PARAS 0044: *Strategies for Aviation Security Stakeholder Information Sharing* • PARAS 0049: *Creating and Maintaining a Strong Security Culture at Airports* • PARAS 0050: *Public Safety and Security at On-Airport Rental Car Facilities* • PARAS 0051: *Guidance for Airport Security Exercises* • PARAS 0055: *Airport Law Enforcement Staffing* • ACRP Synthesis 72: *Tabletop and Full-Scale Emergency Exercises for General Aviation, Non-Hub, and Small Hub Airports* • ACRP Report 153: *Guidebook for IROPS Stakeholder Communication & Coordination* • ACRP Report 280: *Reducing And Managing Disruptive And Unruly Behavior In Airports* • ACRP Legal Research Digest 26: *Regulations Affecting the Exercise of First Amendment Activities at Airports*
Additional Information	• CertAlert 20-02 *Temporary Parking of Overflow Aircraft* • FEMA's ICS Resource Center

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APPENDIX A: EVENT SCOPING CHECKLIST

1. Prepare forecasts for in-terminal passengers before and after event
   - ☐ Request booking data from airlines
   - ☐ Request information on upgauged aircraft or additional flights from station managers
   - ☐ Estimate number of commercial charters
   - ☐ Estimate peak number of passengers in-terminal
   - ☐ Identify deviations from regular scheduled activity
2. Assess GA reservation system requirements
   - ☐ Review reservation application information and procedures
   - ☐ Determine reservation decision milestones
   - ☐ Estimate available FBO transient parking spaces
   - ☐ Estimate number of quick turn-around operations
   - ☐ Estimate number of parked aircraft
   - ☐ Ascertain limiting factors
   - ☐ Assess possible Alternate Measures
3. Define CBP requirements and impacts
   - ☐ Assess impact on terminal
     - ○ Estimate number of international commercial passengers
     - ○ Ascertain limiting factors
     - ○ Assess possible Alternative Measures
   - ☐ Determine likely impact on GA
     - ○ Estimate number of international GA aircraft and passengers to be processed
     - ○ Determine parking space availability and allocation process of spaces for international GA
     - ○ Ascertain limiting factors
     - ○ Assess possible Alternative Measures
4. Define airport capabilities and impacts
   - ☐ Assess impact on terminal

- ○ Determine commercial passenger processing time
- ○ Determine gate dwell time
- ○ Ascertain limiting factors
- ○ Assess possible Alternative Measures

☐ Determine likely impact on GA

- ○ Determine GA passenger and baggage-handling process
- ○ Describe ramp procedures and relocation of aircraft
- ○ Determine impacts on existing GA tenants
- ○ Determine TSA screening requirements
- ○ Ascertain limiting factors
- ○ Assess possible Alternative Measures

5. Review and determine air traffic management strategy and procedures

☐ Define airport acceptance rates

- ○ Describe high- and low-volume ground procedures and taxi routes
- ○ Develop standard communication procedures for high-volume departures
- ○ Determine communication and coordination procedures for ramp control
- ○ Determine location of likely helistops (on-airport landing site(s) and parking areas) and coordinate helicopter routes
- ○ Ascertain limiting factors
- ○ Assess possible alternate measures

6. Estimate ramp requirements

☐ Define FAA requirements and FBO capabilities/impacts

- ○ Estimate the number of GA aircraft parking spaces required
- ○ Define FBO(s) capability and capacity

☐ Assess requirements for use of additional ramp or terminal areas

- ○ Detail access and security requirements

☐ Review fuel requirements and dispatch of refueling trucks

7. Determine cargo ramp requirements
   - ☐ Identify cargo-handling operations
   - ☐ Determine cargo requirements
     - ○ Cargo-aircraft arrival and departure schedules
     - ○ Verify requirements for off-loading, on-loading, and staging cargo
   - ☐ Define Customs and Immigration procedures
   - ☐ Authorize reservations
8. Assess ground transportation requirements
   - ☐ Identify staging area for HVLs, buses, and other large vehicles (moving trucks, RVs)
   - ☐ Define car rental process and identify additional parking requirements
   - ☐ Assess special needs for transporting crew, passengers, and baggage
   - ☐ Consider additional signage requirements
9. Outline command and control procedures
   - ☐ Review event attendance projections and air traffic data
     - ○ Forecast number of operations per day
     - ○ Forecast number of seats arriving and departing per day
   - ☐ Determine likely impact on surrounding airports
     - ○ Provide special event information
     - ○ Discuss airport limiting factors
     - ○ Determine need for status reporting during event
   - ☐ Review current Airport Emergency Plan and interagency response plan
     - ○ Discuss and address contingencies in high traffic flow environment
     - ○ Review readiness of required resources
     - ○ Detail response to limiting factors
   - ☐ Submit request for change of conditions or Alternative Measures to TSA
   - ☐ Determine reporting requirements for assets or readiness conditions that could impact response
     - ○ Define requirements for activation of EOC

- Identify key staff required in EOC and identify the seating plan by role
- Plan for EOC updates and reporting times
- Confirm relationship and reporting responsibilities with outside EOCs

☐ Define reporting responsibilities and command relationships for airport staff

☐ Define communication needs

- Determine number of radios and cell phones required
- Assess on-hand equipment and availability to support event

10. Estimate staffing requirements

☐ Specify additional tasks to be performed on the airside, landside, or terminal to support event

- Identify required tasks to be performed prior to event
- Define critical safety and coordination tasks to be performed during event
- Identify required tasks to be performed after the event to return the airport to normal operations

☐ Assign tasks

- Determine role, department, or committee required to perform each task
- Assign tasks to the appropriate role, department, or committee
- Identify key milestones and schedules to complete tasks

APPENDIX B: COORDINATION PLANNING CHECKLIST

1. Meet with event sponsor / committee
2. Join community-wide event committee
3. Form airport committees and subcommittees
4. Contact other airports in the area affected by event
5. Collect event data from previous host airports or previous year's event debrief
   - ☐ Number of event attendees
   - ☐ Airport operations data
     - ○ Daily aircraft operations added prior to/after event
     - ○ Arriving and departing passengers
     - ○ Number of GA quick turnaround operations
     - ○ Arrivals with/without reservations
     - ○ Helicopter operations
     - ○ Air cargo operations/special requirements
   - ☐ Air traffic management, TFRs, and ramp control operation
     - ○ Gate management
     - ○ Number of aircraft that remain overnight on the ramp
     - ○ Airline aircraft changes
     - ○ Charter activity
     - ○ Customs and Border Protection
     - ○ Passenger processing
   - ☐ Terminal operations
     - ○ Demand for rental cars
     - ○ Concessions inventory
     - ○ Facilities maintenance operations
     - ○ Facilities supply inventory
   - ☐ Number of staff and volunteers
6. Prepare and disseminate contact list of key roles in event execution

7. Prepare and disseminate contact list of important stakeholders not considered a key role
   - ☐ Airport tenant managers/supervisors
   - ☐ Community leaders
   - ☐ Local and regional community event organizations
   - ☐ Airport neighbors
   - ☐ Local media outlets

APPENDIX C: STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL PLANNING CHECKLIST

1. Event description
   - ☐ Executive summary
   - ☐ Event schedule
   - ☐ Airport management goals for the event
2. Airfield Operations
   - ☐ Develop arrival/departure aircraft management and control plans
     - ○ Traffic management and TFRs
     - ○ Procedures for helicopter routes and off-airport landing areas
     - ○ Pavement markings and signage
   - ☐ Describe the arrival and parking reservation system
     - ○ Essential information needed in the reservation application
     - ○ Process to confirm parking reservations
   - ☐ Define GA aircraft ground management plan
     - ○ Communication and coordination for ramp control
     - ○ Aircraft taxi routes
   - ☐ Develop ramp aircraft position layout and management plans
     - ○ Security measures
     - ○ Aircraft services requirements
     - ○ Airport operations responsibilities
   - ☐ Define cargo ramp management plans
     - ○ Security measures
     - ○ Aircraft parking positions
     - ○ Cargo off/on-load equipment requirements
     - ○ Truck staging and procedures on ramp
     - ○ CBP clearance procedures
3. FBO Services
   - ☐ Define expected impact on GA

- ☐ Finalize GA parking plan for FBO ramps
- ☐ Detail ground transportation plans
  - ○ Staging area for HVLs and buses
  - ○ Dispatch of additional escorts
- ☐ Assess FBO limiting factors

4. Terminal Operations
   - ☐ Determine expected impact on terminal and commercial operations
   - ☐ Calculate anticipated passengers per hour per airline (including aircraft upgauging)
   - ☐ Define gate requirements and assignments
     - ○ Gate schedule development and responsibility
     - ○ Equipment and gates required
     - ○ Airline gate reassignments based on aircraft size
     - ○ Airline staffing availability
     - ○ Carrier gate assignments based on international point of origin
     - ○ Airline and airport limiting factors
   - ☐ Coordinate with federal partners (TSA and CBP)
     - ○ Anticipated terminal and GA processing burden
     - ○ Staffing availability
     - ○ Equipment requirements
     - ○ Limiting factors
5. Systems and Equipment Status
   - ☐ Review and prioritize outstanding work orders
     - ○ Work order and task assignments
     - ○ Deadlines for completing priority work orders
   - ☐ Inspect condition of critical systems and equipment
     - ○ Work orders for necessary repairs
     - ○ Replacement system or equipment requirements
   - ☐ Inventory available and functional systems and equipment

- ☐ Develop aviation department vehicle/equipment allocation plan
  - ○ Vehicle and equipment requirements
  - ○ Vehicles and equipment assignments
- ☐ Develop communications plan
  - ○ Reallocation of radios, cell phones, and communication equipment
  - ○ Procurement of additional radios, cell phones, and communication equipment
- ☐ Define system and equipment limiting factors and possible alternate measures

6. Contingency Plans
   - ☐ Define plans for adverse weather conditions, equipment failure, low supply inventory, and ground transportation congestion
   - ☐ Review emergency plans, including ARFF and paramedics
7. Staff Schedule
   - ☐ Develop a schedule for key airport personnel that provides rest periods
   - ☐ Recruit and train volunteers
8. Information Sharing
   - ☐ Update airport website to reflect any changes to normal operations for the event
   - ☐ Formulate press release to the news and social media
   - ☐ Share special aircraft procedures with aviation community

APPENDIX D: SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA AIRPORT SHARED SUPER BOWL BADGE

Super Bowl 50 (SB50) occurred on Sunday, February 7, 2016, at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California. More than 71,000 fans attended, many traveling from the hometowns of the competing teams: Denver, Colorado and Charlotte, North Carolina. Event planners anticipated the arrival and departure of nearly 1,100 private and corporate aircraft at the three major Bay Area airports—San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Oakland International Airport (OAK), and Mineta San Jose International Airport (SJC).

The three Bay Area airports collaborated with a shared FBO tenant that operates at all three locations to determine the most effective strategy for managing the increase in aircraft and customers, and staffing demands. Planning efforts determined that the FBO would need to bring in temporary duty (TDY) employees from other locations to increase staff for the event; but with the fluctuation in operations throughout the day and week, the TDY staff needed the flexibility to move between the airports to assist in operations where most needed.

The airports decided to create a special badge for the event that would allow the badge holder to perform unescorted operations on the FBO AOA ramp at all three airports. The badge would not have the ability to open access portals secured with the airports' access control systems but would authorize the TDY staff to escort aircraft passengers, flight crews, unbadged service vendors, and ground transportation providers.

BADGING PROCESS

One of the major concerns for implementing the common SB50 badges was meeting TSA's requirements for establishing a badge applicant's identification. The individuals had already successfully completed Criminal History Records Checks and Security Threat Assessments (STA) at their home airports, but the airports still required an STA in order to issue a badge for AOA access. To do this, the badging office needed to physically inspect the applicant's identification and work authorization documents to verify authenticity and the identity of the individual presenting the documents.

Many airports utilizing TDY staff to support short term operations will require that the applicant arrive 2–3 days before the start of the duties to complete the badge application and training. For many reasons, this short timeline can be challenging for the tenant, TDY employees, and the badging office. It can be manageable for a small number of TDY applications, but the airports expected to process around 50 FBO TDY employees in addition to other terminal TDY staff.

The three Bay Area airports each submitted a request for Alternative Measures to TSA, which allowed the badging office to accept photocopies of the applicant's identification and work authorization documents in order to submit the STA. This gave the badging offices more time to process the applications before the applicant arrived. The TDY staff arrived the day before they started their duties to complete the required training and the badging process, which included the badging office staff physically verifying that the documentation was valid and identical to the photocopied/scanned identity and work authorization documents sent with the SB50 badge application. The badge could only be issued to the individual after this final verification.

Each badge was assigned a unique, serialized number to support tracking and auditing. If a badge was reported as lost, the badge number would be added to a Lost Badge List given to security personnel verifying credentials and granting access to the designated FBO ramps at all three airports. The badge holder would also be required to pay an $85 rebadging fee to deter lost badges.

All of the SB50 badges were set to expire the Wednesday after the event (February 10), which provided the badge holders with a couple of extra days to support recovery activities at the FBOs and return their badges. Failure to return the badge would result in a $50 fine issued to the FBO.

BADGE DISPLAY AND POSSESSION REQUIREMENTS

As the host airport, SFO was tasked with printing the badges for the TDY employees. The badge included the SB50 logo, the expiration date in red, the badge holder's name, and a serialized badge number. The Operations contact numbers for all three airports were printed on the reverse side of the badge for quick reference to report suspicious activity. While on the AOA, the badge holders were required to continuously display their SB50 badge in the same manner required for an airport-issued identification badge—on the outermost garment above the waist level.

The badge did not include a photo of the badge holder, so the TDY staff were required to carry an unexpired federal or state government-issued photo identification that could be verified against the badge information and the Allow List showing all authorized TDY employees. Copies of the Allow List were given to security personnel granting access to the designated FBO ramps.

SB50 SPECIAL TRAINING

As part of the badging requirements, the SB50 badge holders were provided with an abbreviated version of the AOA / Non-Movement training, which focused on the specific areas where the SB50 badge holders were permitted unescorted access. This training was provided during a series of instructor-led sessions using presentations to share information about all three airports in one day.

The information presented during the sessions included:

- Airport layouts / AOAs with annotated maps of security boundaries
- Airport SIDA, AOA, and SB50 badge features
- SB50 badge display and possession requirements
- Reporting a lost/stolen SB50 badge
- Escort procedures
- Challenge procedures
- Violations and enforcement actions
- Reporting suspicious activity
- Emergency and other contact information

CONCLUSION

The collaborative efforts of the three Bay Area airports, the FBO, and TSA ensured an efficient and secure badging process to support the temporary surge of increased operations during SB50. The flexibility in badging procedures and TSA requirements, including the acceptance of photocopied/scanned identity and work authorization documents for STAs and expedited training sessions, allowed TDY staff to be credentialed and operational with minimal impact to normal operations. The use of Lost Badge and Allow Lists provided an additional layer of security, while the structured expiration, return process, and punitive fines further upheld accountability, security controls, and compliance.

Ultimately, the SB50 common badge initiative demonstrates the effectiveness of coordination among neighboring airports to support flexible, efficient, and secure operations to accommodate surge activity without incurring significant operational impacts during a locally hosted major event.

APPENDIX E: POST-EVENT DEBRIEFING AND EVALUATION CHECKLIST

1. Review the airport's goals for the event, established during pre-planning efforts
2. Collect actual data on aircraft and passenger arrivals and departures
   - ☐ FAA information on hourly air traffic operations at airport during event
   - ☐ TSA and CBP information on hourly number of passengers processed
   - ☐ FBO information on number of aircraft serviced
3. Evaluate the airport's performance during the event (anticipated vs. actual)
   - ☐ Arrival/departure curves
   - ☐ GA and commercial operations
   - ☐ Aircraft parking locations
   - ☐ Gate planning
   - ☐ Ground handling
   - ☐ Baggage handling
   - ☐ Passenger processing
   - ☐ Calls for service (safety and security)
   - ☐ Staffing levels (LEOs, volunteers, escorts, translators)
4. Solicit and summarize comments from stakeholders
5. Schedule and hold debrief/After-Action Review with key stakeholders
   - ☐ General overview of event strategies and implementation
   - ☐ Event response
     - ○ What worked well?
     - ○ What could be improved?
     - ○ What planned actions failed or added limited (or no) value?
     - ○ What planning suggestions should be incorporated into the next event?
6. Document lessons learned
   - ☐ Incorporate lessons learned into future event planning
   - ☐ Identify and assign improvement tasks