



OFFICE OF SPECIAL EVENTS
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<http://www.austintexas.gov/parkevents>

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Processing:

WEATHER CANCELLATION AT EVENTS – EXPECTATIONS AND PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS

Overview:

Day to day, patron and staff safety, health, and protection of public property are paramount when events are conducted on City property. The City of Austin employee has a critical day to day duty of protecting life and property. Being able to make decisions and solve problems effectively is a necessary and vital part of the job for every person working, monitoring, or reviewing an event.

Purpose:

This procedure establishes the procedure, performance requirements, processing, development of staff recommendations for event suspension, delay and/or cancellation.

In all instances, patron and staff safety and health, as well as public property protection are paramount when conducting events on City property.

In the event that the National Weather Service issued an advisory (wind, high wind, tornado, thunderstorm, rain, flash flood, winter storm, hail/sleet or similar) pre-, during, or post-event, the City of Austin must be prepared to protect life, and public property.

Emergency management includes the assessment of hazards and risks for an organization to ensure that plans can be implemented to avoid issues. The four phases of emergency management include mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Having Emergency Management Plans help organizations to identify what may be potential risks and hazards in order to prevent them or mitigate the impact. Plans must be implemented through communication, processes, and exercise. Should an emergency occur, knowing who to contact and how to coordinate during an emergency affects how well an organization responds. After an emergency, an organization should review and reassess its processes and plans to ensure that all contingencies have been considered for the future.

The **National Weather Service** issues alerts for strong winds, heavy rains, thunder, lightning, severe heat or other potential weather problems that should always be considered for events, not just outdoor events.

While weather events may never materialize, alerts provide a warning to those planning to be outside.

Procedure Date(s): September 2010.

Authority/Approvals:

1. Situation Reports: City Event or Operations Staff, Public Safety Officials
2. Cancellations, Suspension, or Evacuations
 - a. Event Manager, or Event Staff with Manager notification, Public Safety Officials, PARD Operations Staff

Locations Authorized:

All City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department property, facilities, event locations or similar.

Standard Document /Resource Location(s):

- **City of Austin PARD**
- Standard procedure documents are located:
 - G drive, parkshared folder, reservations, policies
 - (this is a secured folder for events staff only)
- **Situation Report** (template located in the reservations folder)
- Utilize existing technology located on the park event website.
www.austintexas.gov/parkevents.
 - National Weather Service (radars, on duty office staffing)
- City of Austin Office of Emergency Management Duty Officer
- Local News Station Weather Contacts

- **Organizer**
- Organizer provided "Inclement Weather Plan and/or Safety Plan"

Standard Operating Procedure:

Being prepared involves pre-planning for events, and knowing what emergencies most typically originate at an event.

Natural Based Causes

1. Weather based: drought, rain, flash flood, sleet, icing, high winds, lightning, thunderstorm, tornado
2. Power outage: non-human error failure of power supplies
3. Fire: from lightning, drought, or heat wave
4. Other: food-bourne, or nuisance insect related

Human Based Causes

1. Anthropogenic hazards (“human made hazards”). Criminal activity, bombs, threats.
2. Water main/supply line leaks.
3. Machinery/cart/equipment accidents.
4. Overcrowding from poor safety planning/staffing or deficient real time event crowd monitoring.
5. Inadequate water supplies in response to environmental conditions.
6. Power outage.
7. Fire from improperly maintained cooking or heat generating devices.
8. Structural failure.

Minimum Steps in Evaluating a Risk/Threat

City staff should follow steps outlined below:

1. Gather facts quickly and efficiently utilizing all staff resources available.
2. Assess risk, timing and required response
3. Raise the alarm
4. Inform the public
5. Onsite emergency activation (safety plans)
6. Summon emergency services
7. Crowd managed and/or evacuation
8. Traffic management, pedestrian management, and emergency vehicles ingress
9. Incident control
10. Provision of safety/medical services

The following process should be **anticipated by organizers** when the City exercises its right to manage public property/public safety:

- A. Notice provided to Organizer:
 - a. Methods: phone, text and/or email to event organizer of “record” that conditions exist which are of concern.
 - b. Situation Report may pre-empt developing conditions to document City concern/notices
 - c. NOTE: In true emergency situations, City personnel may be tasked to make decisions in an instant. Any City employee observing developing, hazardous, or eminent threatening conditions may act.
- B. Organizer will immediately complete due diligence to pull and ready implementation/activation of the event’s weather plan.
- C. Potential additional items:
 - a. Coordination of on-site meeting at the earliest possible convenience which includes the following personnel:
 - i. Event Organizer
 - ii. Park Site Manager
 - iii. Park District Manager
 - iv. Office of Special Events Staff
 - v. Park Assistant Director and Director are notified immediately
 - vi. Park Public Information Officer is notified immediately
 - b. The following will be reviewed and assessed:
 - i. Contract compliance to date (status of all contractual performance to date).
 - ii. Have preventative and pre-emptive measures been executed diligently to negate or minimize grounds impact? For example....
 - 1. Has the event been delayed or suspended due to prior inclement weather?
 - 2. Has gate/event start time proactively messaged and delayed?
 - 3. Have all weather activation items pro-actively been engaged to protect public property?
 - iii. Community use and access impact post event.
 - iv. Additional adverse weather predictions.

GROUNDS/TURF SPECIFIC IMPLICATIONS
(see event contract)

Upon receipt of pre, post or event day(s) precipitation and/or inclement weather conditions (*ex. rain, snow sleet, lightning*) which originate from natural causes, which has resulted in saturated, muddy, slippery and/or unsafe grounds conditions.

- **Inclement weather may lead to suspension of cancellation of the event to protect public property.**
- Upon receiving as little as **¼” (one quarter inch)** of rain event organizer should take immediate action to activate rain plan and grounds protections such as restricting cart

traffic. At this time, PARD and the City public safety representatives should be contacted to begin discussions related to event safety, further activation steps/triggers by organizer for advanced/additional adverse scenarios.

- Receiving **.5" (one-half inch) of rain or LESS** in a single day or sustained over a period of days (for example during load-in period) will likely make park grounds unusable for event purposes of any nature until sufficient time and/or environmental factors allow conditions of public grounds to become safe and sustainable for event use. The City shall make this determination in its sole right as property manager to ensure protection of life, property and ensure safety. Organizer will be contacted to discuss existing conditions on site, and the City's minimum situation report and requests for action will be presented.
 - **Example items which may be required and messaged to Organizer:** Extend/continue overnight security at organizer expense to continue protecting grounds, delay vendor load in/out (Organizer should ensure vendors are noticed in advance and plan ahead), manage messaging to event patrons and local media, suspend all approved vehicle/cart traffic, Immediately deploy rain/weather plan resources (ex. pine or cypress mulch, staffing, etc), and/or closure of areas or locations within the event.