

Special Event Emergency Plan Instructions

Special Event Emergency Plan (SEEP)

Successful events begin with thoughtful planning and a commitment to safety. The University of Vermont's Special Event Emergency Plan (SEEP) is designed to help event organizers prepare for emergencies, identify potential risks, coordinate resources, and establish clear procedures that support a safe experience for attendees, staff, volunteers, and visitors. A well-developed event safety plan helps reduce confusion, improve communication, and promote a coordinated response if unexpected incidents occur.

The SEEP serves as a practical planning tool for university departments, student organizations, affiliates, and external groups hosting events on University of Vermont property. Whether planning a small indoor gathering, a large outdoor festival, an athletic competition, or a high-profile campus event, the SEEP provides a structured approach to documenting critical safety information and emergency procedures.

Purpose of the Special Event Emergency Plan

The purpose of the SEEP is to help organizers think through the information, resources, and actions needed before an emergency occurs. By completing this form, event planners can:

- Identify emergency contacts and key event personnel.
- Establish communication methods for staff and volunteers.
- Coordinate emergency medical, law enforcement, and security resources.
- Plan for weather-related hazards and operational disruptions.
- Identify evacuation assembly areas and shelter-in-place locations.
- Brief event staff on emergency procedures and responsibilities.
- Provide emergency responders with important event information if needed.

The completed plan becomes a reference document that can be used by event leadership before and during the event to support decision-making and emergency response activities.

How to Use This Form

This form is organized to guide event organizers through the essential components of emergency planning in a practical and easy-to-follow format. Each section identifies information that may be needed during an emergency and explains how event organizers can prepare in advance.

Because every event is unique, some sections may be more applicable than others. Organizers should complete all relevant portions of the form based on the size, complexity, location, and anticipated risks associated with the event. Outdoor events, events with large attendance, events involving temporary structures, and events requiring security or medical support may require additional planning and coordination.

The form is intended to be completed in collaboration with key stakeholders, including event leadership, venue managers, crowd managers, University departments, contracted vendors, and public safety partners when appropriate.

Steps for Completing and Using the SEEP

1. Complete the Plan During Event Planning

Begin the SEEP as early as possible during the event planning process. Document event details, attendance estimates, emergency contacts, communication methods, weather monitoring procedures, and emergency response locations.

For larger or more complex events, organizers should review the plan with appropriate campus partners and incorporate emergency planning considerations into overall event operations.

2. Identify Emergency Resources and Response Locations

Before the event, become familiar with the venue and surrounding area. Identify:

- Building exits and evacuation routes.
- Outdoor evacuation assembly areas.
- Indoor shelter-in-place locations.
- Event operations locations.
- Nearby emergency equipment and resources.
- Access points for emergency responders.

Understanding the venue and emergency procedures in advance helps ensure a faster and more organized response during an incident.

3. Establish Communication Methods

Determine how event staff and leadership will communicate before and during the event using the PACE (Primary, Alternate, Contingency, Emergency) communications framework.

Examples may include:

- Cell phones
- Text messaging groups
- Two-way radios
- Face-to-face communications
- Runners or designated messengers

Redundant communication methods help maintain continuity when primary systems become unavailable.

4. Monitor Weather and Event Conditions

For outdoor events and weather-sensitive activities, designate an individual responsible for monitoring weather conditions and communicating hazards to event leadership.

Review forecasts before the event and continuously monitor conditions during the event. Event organizers should be prepared to delay, modify, relocate, suspend, or cancel activities if conditions become unsafe.

5. Brief Event Staff Before the Event

On the day of the event, conduct a short safety briefing with event staff, volunteers, crowd managers, and key leadership personnel.

Review:

- Emergency contacts.
- Staff roles and responsibilities.
- Evacuation assembly areas.
- Shelter-in-place locations.
- Weather procedures.

- Communication methods.
- Procedures for reporting emergencies.

A pre-event briefing helps ensure everyone understands their responsibilities before an incident occurs.

6. Keep the Plan Accessible During the Event

Maintain a copy of the completed SEEP at the event command post, event operations center, registration area, or other designated location. Copies may be maintained electronically or in print.

Key event leaders should know where the plan is located and be able to access it quickly if needed.

7. Use the Plan During Emergencies

If an emergency occurs, use the information contained in the SEEP to support decision-making and response efforts. The document should assist event leadership with:

- Contacting key personnel.
- Activating emergency communications.
- Directing evacuations.
- Implementing shelter-in-place procedures.
- Coordinating with emergency responders.
- Accounting for staff and participants.

The goal is to provide a clear and organized framework for managing emergencies and protecting event participants.

Key Planning Principles

The University of Vermont encourages event organizers to follow three fundamental event safety principles:

Know Your Venue

Become familiar with the event location, exits, emergency procedures, gathering points, and shelter locations before the event begins.

Train and Inform Your Staff

Ensure event staff, volunteers, and crowd managers understand emergency procedures, communications protocols, and their assigned responsibilities.

Use Available Resources

Leverage the expertise and support available through University departments, venue managers, public safety officials, emergency responders, and other partners involved in event planning and operations.

By completing and maintaining a Special Event Emergency Plan, organizers help ensure that University of Vermont events are prepared, coordinated, and capable of responding effectively to emergencies while providing a safe and welcoming environment for all participants.

Please contact representatives of the Department of Emergency Management at emergency@uvm.edu or firesafe@uvm.edu if you have any questions about emergency planning for events or would like us to review and provide feedback on a Special Event Emergency Plan you are creating.