



GUIDANCE TO ORGANISERS OF PUBLIC EVENTS

PUBLIC EVENTS

1. This leaflet explains the responsibilities of both organisers and police at public events and how these can be met through a partnership approach to event planning and management. Guidelines are given for the use of stewards and safety officers. More detailed advice may be sought from the Public Order Branch, New Scotland Yard, or from the Superintendent of your local police station.
2. Whilst the freedom to hold events, to march and to demonstrate is important, so too is the freedom of people to go about their normal daily business with a minimum of disruption. London is a national and international focus for events whose origins may be of little local relevance. Accordingly, every effort must be made to ensure that a balance is struck between the rights and freedoms of those taking part in an event and those living and working close by.

ORGANISERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

3. The organisation of a public event is a considerable responsibility. In addition to carrying moral and social responsibilities, organisers have civil, common and criminal law responsibilities, for which they may have to answer in the courts. Organisers may be liable for the consequences when things go wrong, particularly if there are defects in the planning or control of the event. This is more likely to happen if other interested parties are not consulted or if their advice is ignored.
4. Organisers should be aware of the provisions of the 1986 Public Order Act. Failure to give police written advance notice of the date, time and venue/route of a procession; variation of such details from those previously notified; or failure to comply with changes, conditions or prohibitions imposed by police on processions or assemblies may constitute criminal offences.
5. It should be noted that to comply with Sessional Orders of Parliament which require approaches to both Houses to be kept free and open, the Commissioner of Police will direct the dispersal of certain assemblies or processions in a surrounding area termed the Sessional Area of Parliament.
6. The use of certain locations for assemblies or dispersal requires permission from the relevant authority. Such permission must be sent by the organisers to police as soon as possible before the event.
7. One of the main responsibilities of the organiser is concern for the safety of the public taking part, as well as for those in any way affected by it. This responsibility extends to avoiding damage to property, fear or alarm to the public, or disruption to the local community. Ensuring public safety at a public event is NOT the first responsibility of the police. Police are responsible for maintaining the peace, preventing breaches of the law and taking action against law breakers.
8. The organisers' role of maintaining public safety can best be accomplished if there is no crime or disorder taking place. Equally, the police role of preventing lawlessness and disorder can best be accomplished when public safety is assured. Since these roles are clearly interdependent, it is in the interest of both organisers and police to work together with joint responsibility for the regulation of the event. The Metropolitan Police Service firmly believes that this partnership approach is the most effective way forward for all parties involved.

STATEMENTS OF INTENT

9. The principles of partnership with event organisers are applied at football matches in London's football stadia. Matches are the subject of written agreement between the club and the police. Though these "Statements of Intent" are not legally binding contracts, they provide a constructive focus for police and the clubs, to ensure that all the important issues are addressed. The parties sign the document to record their agreement, and, though there is no compulsion to do so, it has become a matter of acceptable professional good practice. Organisers of other public events are asked to sign a similar "Statement of Intent" which reflects an understanding of roles and responsibilities, and agreement on how they will be met.
10. Whilst football matches have many features which can be predicated on the basis of past experiences and familiar, purpose-built venues, this is not the case for many other public events. Marches (public processions), in particular, present a moving venue which is far more unpredictable. Therefore it is very important that planning for such events starts as early as possible.

11. In all cases, accurate early predictions of the type and number of participants are needed so that arrangements can be made for support by other public and emergency services, for traffic diversions and for traffic regulation, and for the organisers to arrange an appropriate level of stewarding.

STEWARDS

12. An agreed plan for a public event, however good it may be, is of no value if there is no means of ensuring that the event takes place according to the plan. It is vital that the organisers keep control throughout the event. This is normally achieved by using stewards who act as agents of the organisers to ensure that the participants abide by what has been agreed and carry out decisions made by the organisers as the event proceeds, through a clearly defined chain of command.

Number of Stewards

13. **There should be enough stewards to express the organisers' wishes to all the participants.**
14. Though the needs of individual events will vary considerably, it is recommended that there should be at least one steward to every 50 participants. Where participants are to arrive by coach, it is best to appoint one or more stewards to each coach.
15. In certain circumstances organisers of events may request the services of police officers to perform stewarding functions. If so they should liaise with police on this matter at the earliest moment, as officers may not be readily available, particularly at short notice. The services of police officers to act as stewards will be charged for by police on a full cost recovery basis under a special service agreement. Police officers employed to perform the stewarding role act as private agents of the organisers and will exercise their powers of constable outside that role only should the need arise. Ideally the Metropolitan Police Service considers it better if adequate stewarding at public events is provided without the use of police officers.

Briefing of Stewards

16. **Stewards must be briefed so that they know the organisers' intentions and directions.**
17. To enable effective organisation of stewards, a Head Steward should be appointed (preferably someone who is a member of the organising committee), to deal with all matters relating to stewards, including their briefing. The Head Steward should liaise with the police officer in charge of the event both before and during its progress.
18. The overall stewarding of the event should be broken down into sections and a Chief Steward appointed to be responsible for a group of stewards who will look after a particular section, location or portion of the event.

Fitness of Stewards

19. **Stewards should be fitted, both physically and temperamentally, to carry out the organisers' wishes and to ensure that the participants comply with them. It is advised that stewards should be over 18 years of age.**
20. Selecting the right people to be stewards is extremely important. They need the ability to be firm, but in a tactful, friendly and good-humoured way. Effective stewards develop sufficient rapport with the participants for whom they are responsible to enable them to identify and defuse potentially difficult situations and promote an atmosphere of goodwill.

Identification of Stewards

21. **Stewards should be easily identifiable so that participants and others know that they represent the organisers.**
22. Experience has shown that items such as lapel badges are insufficient for this purpose. A distinctive garment should be worn, ideally a coloured tabard, or at the very least, an armband. These items should be issued before the event.

Communication with Organisers

23. **Stewards should be in communication with the organisers throughout the event.**
24. To retain control, the organisers must be able to communicate with the stewards during the event. This may be achieved by portable telephone or radio links between the organisers, head steward, chief stewards and stewards. Communication must be a two-way process. Stewards need to report back to the organisers developments during the event, so that they can make informed decisions. The nature and scale of the event will determine whether a formal organisers' control centre needs to be established.

Communication with Police

25. **Stewards must immediately inform police if any matter requires police attention.**
26. Stewards should be helpful, private people who are alert to anything which may need the attention of police. They must report to police anything they think may lead to a breach of the peace or law and must then act on the directions of police. If the directions of the organisers and those of police appear to conflict, stewards must be clear that if they ignore the instructions of police they may be committing an offence of obstructing police in the execution of their duty. Police will intervene if the stewards fail to take action as requested or if participants ignore the stewards' requests.

Stewards' Powers

27. It must be stressed that stewards are agents of the organisers. They are NOT police. Therefore:
 - Though they should take all reasonable steps to prevent disorder or breaches of the peace, they must NOT exceed the powers of the ordinary private person.
 - They must NOT carry or have near them any weapon, since carrying a weapon in public is prohibited by law, unless there is lawful authority or reasonable excuse. Being a steward carries no such authority and gives no reasonable excuse.

Possession of a weapon as a deterrent is prohibited too.

SAFETY OFFICERS

28. Ensuring, through the work of stewards, that the event takes place according to the agreed plan will go a long way towards fulfilling the organisers' responsibility for public safety. Also, depending on the nature of the event, it may be necessary to appoint safety officers and a safety manager with specific public safety duties. It is just as important that they, as well as stewards, are properly selected, briefed, identified and equipped for their role.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ORGANISERS

29. Whenever practicable organisers should encourage people attending an event to use public transport for the journey to an assembly and from a dispersal point. They should provide information as to times and availability of transport.
30. Vehicles or animals should not be used on processions. The use of motor vehicles often increases the risk of injury to participants and animals can often become overawed by large crowds and panic.
31. People should not be allowed to leave a procession to distribute leaflets. If leaflets are to be distributed this should be done independently of the event.
32. When it is intended to present a petition, prior notice must be given to police because special arrangements usually have to be made with the intended recipient.
33. Ideally collections should not be made at processions. However if money is to be collected in connection with a procession, an application should be made for a licence to do so.
34. If banners are to be used it is essential that they are designed with a hole to reduce the risk of danger when they are used in high winds.
35. The use of public address systems should be controlled to ensure that the local community is not disturbed.
36. Organisers should ensure that children under the age of 16 are accompanied by a responsible adult and are kept away from any edge of a procession which adjoins moving traffic.
37. Organisers should consider making provisions for first aid.

DEBRIEFING

38. When an event has ended, the organisers should arrange that the stewards and safety officers are debriefed so that all information useful to the organisers and the police may be gathered. The organisers should liaise with police after the event so that such information may be exchanged and discussed. In this way all parties involved may develop their systems of event planning and management in the light of experience.