

A guide for public sector organizations

Managing visitor surges, safety, and continuity during major events





Major events test more than venues. They test the whole operating environment.

For public-sector organizations, major events create a concentrated period of pressure across public safety, transportation, emergency management, communications, continuity, and community confidence.

Host cities and surrounding jurisdictions must often manage large visitor surges, changing risk conditions, complex stakeholder coordination, and heightened public expectations, all while maintaining routine services and preparing for unexpected disruption.

These events can generate economic and civic opportunity. They also create an operating environment where small disruptions escalate quickly. A transportation issue can affect emergency response. Severe weather can disrupt crowd movement and communications. A cyber incident can impair public-facing services. Misinformation can create confusion faster than official guidance can catch up.

In this environment, readiness depends on more than planning documents. It depends on whether agencies can maintain situational awareness, communicate clearly, coordinate across functions, and adapt in real time.

This guide explores the key public-sector challenges surrounding major events and offers a practical checklist to help agencies evaluate readiness.

Cities and agencies are operating in a more complex risk environment

Major events have always required coordination. What is different now is the range of simultaneous conditions agencies must be ready to manage.

Public-sector leaders are often balancing:

- Dense and shifting population flows
- Strain on transport and infrastructure
- Pressure on emergency services
- Heightened public visibility
- Cyber and communications risk
- Severe weather exposure
- Misinformation and rumor spread
- Cross-agency coordination demands

These risks do not arrive neatly, one at a time. They overlap.

That is why readiness for major events cannot be treated as a narrow event-management exercise. It has to be viewed as an operational resilience challenge that spans departments, systems, and external partners.



Visitor surges create operational stress quickly

One of the most immediate impacts of a major event is surge.

Sudden increases in population can affect roads, transit systems, healthcare access, emergency response times, venue perimeters, utilities, and public communications. Even when planning assumptions are strong, real-world conditions can shift rapidly based on timing, behavior, weather, or unplanned incidents.

Agencies need to be prepared not just for attendance, but for movement, concentration, spillover, and secondary effects.

That means asking:

- Can we see where pressure is building?
- Do we have a shared understanding of emerging issues?
- Can we quickly inform residents, visitors, and stakeholders?
- Are response teams aligned when conditions change?

A surge event becomes harder to manage when information is delayed, fragmented, or trapped within individual functions.

Converging threats increase pressure on public-sector teams

Major events raise the possibility of multiple disruptions occurring at once.

A weather event may affect transport and outdoor crowd safety. A cyber issue may impact public systems or communications channels. A protest or security incident may alter movement patterns and strain law enforcement. A misinformation wave may generate confusion, fear, or poor public compliance. Routine emergencies still occur in parallel.

For public-sector teams, the challenge is not simply preparing for a list of possible incidents. It is preparing for combined disruption.

This is where traditional plans can struggle. When information moves slowly or coordination depends on manual escalation, agencies lose time. When departments operate from different assumptions, response quality drops. When public communications lag, trust can erode quickly.

Large-scale events demand meticulous preparation and strategic coordination to guarantee the safety and satisfaction of all involved. Everbridge event risk management solutions provide a range of benefits and features to enhance safety, security, and operational efficiency during events.

[Learn more](#)

Why traditional event planning is no longer enough

Static plans remain important, but they are not sufficient on their own.

Major events now require the ability to:

- Detect changes as they emerge
- Understand who and what may be affected
- Coordinate decisions across agencies
- Communicate quickly and consistently
- Adapt operations without losing continuity

That shift is important. Public-sector readiness is no longer defined only by whether a plan exists. It is increasingly defined by whether agencies can translate awareness into coordinated action under pressure.

This is where resilience becomes operational.

From preparedness to real-time resilience

Resilient public-sector organizations are able to connect planning, visibility, communication, and response. Instead of relying on periodic updates, they continuously monitor changing conditions, enabling agencies to work from a common operating picture. These organizations communicate with the public and stakeholders using timely, relevant guidance and have clear escalation paths that support fast decisions. By doing so, they can maintain continuity even when the situation evolves in unexpected ways. While this doesn't eliminate disruption entirely, it makes it much more manageable.



Key asset

Major event readiness checklist

Use the checklist below to review how prepared your city, agency, or cross-functional team may be for a major event.

- ☐ Do we have a clear picture of how visitor surges may affect transportation, public spaces, essential services, and emergency operations?
- ☐ Can we monitor changing conditions across weather, safety, cyber, infrastructure, and crowd movement in real time?
- ☐ Are key agencies working from a shared operating picture during event-related disruptions?
- ☐ Do we have clear protocols for escalation, coordination, and decision-making across departments and partners?
- ☐ Can we communicate quickly and clearly with residents, visitors, staff, and stakeholders if conditions change?
- ☐ Have we planned for secondary impacts beyond the venue itself, including transport nodes, public gathering areas, and surrounding communities?
- ☐ Are continuity plans aligned with event operations in case routine services are disrupted?
- ☐ Have we considered how misinformation or communications outages could affect public response?
- ☐ Can we adapt operational plans quickly if conditions shift before or during the event?
- ☐ Have we identified the most likely coordination gaps before the event begins?

This checklist is designed as a practical planning tool. It can be used by emergency management, public safety, continuity, transport, communications, or multi-agency planning teams.

How to use this checklist

This checklist works best when reviewed as a cross-functional exercise, not by one team in isolation.

As you work through it, look for areas where:

- Information is fragmented
- Coordination depends on manual workarounds
- Communications may be delayed
- Responsibilities are unclear
- Continuity assumptions have not been stress-tested

These are often the points where otherwise strong plans break down under real event pressure.

Common gaps this checklist can reveal

For many agencies, major-event planning is well established. But a practical review often still uncovers issues such as:

- Limited visibility across departments
- Difficulty sharing situational updates quickly
- Communications plans that are too broad or too slow
- Weak alignment between event operations and continuity planning
- Overreliance on static plans in fast-changing conditions
- Unclear ownership during cross-agency escalation

Surfacing these issues before the event is the point.

"The goal is not just to survive disruption, but to thrive through it. Use these questions to challenge assumptions, start new conversations, and accelerate your resilience."

Dave Wagner, President & Chief Executive Officer, Everbridge

What to strengthen next

As you refine your approach, prioritize actions that improve agility and coordination:

- Strengthen shared situational awareness
- Align response across emergency management, public safety, transport, and communications
- Prepare targeted, timely public messaging
- Review continuity assumptions under surge and disruption conditions
- Identify and simplify escalation paths
- Test how agencies will adapt when conditions change unexpectedly

The goal is not just to prepare for one event. It is to improve your ability to respond confidently across future high-pressure scenarios.

Next step: take the full Everbridge Best in Resilience Maturity Self-Assessment

Resilience means more than responding to disruption. It requires the ability to move quickly, act intelligently, and coordinate effectively across the organization when pressure is high.

Take the Everbridge Best in Resilience Maturity Self-Assessment to benchmark your resilience capabilities and identify where to strengthen visibility, coordination, response, and readiness before the next disruption.

Take the Everbridge Best in Resilience Maturity Self-Assessment

Take assessment

Experience the power of Everbridge for yourself

Ready to transform how you manage critical events and strengthen your organization's resilience? Request your personalized demo to see Everbridge in action today. Call us at +1 (888) 366-4911 to speak with a resilience expert, or schedule a demo at everbridge.com/demo

Speak to an expert



About Everbridge

Everbridge is the global leader in Critical Event Management (CEM), helping organizations achieve a true business resilience advantage. With Everbridge High Velocity CEM™, our customers accelerate response times, minimize disruption, and maintain operational control amid today's most complex threats. Using Purpose-built AI, decision-ready risk intelligence, and full lifecycle automation, Everbridge enables organizations to know earlier, respond faster, and improve continuously with confidence.

Everbridge... Keeping People Safe and Organizations Running™



Visit [Everbridge.com](https://everbridge.com)



Read our [company blog](#)



Follow us on [LinkedIn](#)



Follow us on [X](#)

Everbridge delivers a business resilience advantage with High Velocity CEM™, powered by Purpose-built AI and decision-ready intelligence to accelerate response, reduce downtime, and protect what matters most. Request a demo at everbridge.com/demo or call +1 (888) 366-4911.

