



Across the United States, Americans congregate daily in public spaces to work, shop, go to school, celebrate, worship, enjoy recreation, or cheer on their favorite sports team. However, as recent terrorist attacks have revealed, public gatherings are vulnerable. Adversaries may perceive concert halls, theatres, restaurants, malls, parades, houses of worship, sports venues, and other public locations as attractive targets that may incur mass casualties, have substantial psychological impacts, and draw extensive media coverage.

Protecting Public Gathering Sites and Special Events

To mitigate risk and enhance the security and resilience of public gathering sites and special events, partnerships between the private sector and the public sector are critical. To this end, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) shares information and provides training and technical assistance to help government partners, infrastructure owners and operators, and special event organizers safeguard public gathering sites and protect human life and critical infrastructure.

In local communities, DHS Protective Security Advisors (PSAs) work with Federal, State, and local government officials and private sector partners to protect critical infrastructure and special events. Such activity includes security and resilience assessments of critical infrastructure; onsite support at major events, such as the Super Bowl; and training and technical assistance to infrastructure owners and operators, community groups, and faith-based organizations.

The types of support DHS provides include:

Unclassified intelligence on terrorist tactics, techniques, and procedures. Through bulletins and prepared briefings, DHS educates partners on the types of threats and emergencies to prepare for.

Suspicious activity reporting assistance. As part of the “If You See Something, Say Something™” campaign, DHS helps raise public awareness of the indicators of terrorism and terrorism-related crime, as well as the importance of reporting suspicious activity to State and local law enforcement.

Active shooter preparedness. DHS provides training, products, and resources on issues such as active shooter awareness, incident response, and workplace violence.

Counter-improvised explosive device training. DHS educates government and private sector partners on strategies to prevent, protect against, respond to, and mitigate bombing incidents.

Protective measures for consideration. DHS advises partners on specific steps to consider taking in order to improve their organization’s security and resilience

Table-top exercises based on recent incidents. DHS has developed an interactive, discussion-based exercise focused on a violent extremist attack. The scenario consists of two modules: pre-incident information sharing and incident response.

For more information about Security Assistance for Public Gatherings, contact the National Infrastructure Coordination Center at NIICC@hq.dhs.gov.