

## What to do if somebody dies at an event.

The unfortunate reality is that people do die in public places, and at events, and not always because of injuries sustained in a crash. This guide is to help Event Providers (EP) and Event Delivery Teams (EDT) to prepare for and deal with these tragic situations.

When the Senior Medical Officer (SMO) attends a collapsed or injured member of the public or a patron and they are showing no life signs on a venue currently conducting an activity with RACERS accreditation, this situation is to be immediately reported to the most senior person on site representing the Event Provider's organisation. This person will immediately take command as the Situation Manager.

### **STAGE 1 – Stabilise the situation & notify emergency services:**

The Situation Manager (SM) must immediately stabilise the situation and:

1. The SM will send a senior member of the EDT to lock all gates around the venue and man the main gate. This is the gate the emergency services will be requested to enter through.
2. Task an EDT member with notifying the Venue Management and RACERS that a possibly fatal incident has occurred by SMS or by voice call.
3. SM to send a senior member of the EDT to gather the casualty details (Name, Address, DOB, Next of Kin, Name, Address and phone number).
4. SM to provide to SMO casualty name and DOB as soon as possible
5. If the likely deceased person is not or cannot be moved to the medical centre or some other private location immediately arrange for privacy screening of the site to protect their dignity.
6. Instruct the SMO to call for an ambulance if they haven't already done so.
7. If the injuries are sustained are the result of a crash, send two EDT members to guard the crash site and ensure that no items are moved, or removed, from the site of the crash by anyone including themselves. If the person has deceased, this is now a **crime scene** and it must be protected from other people at the venue, any sightseers and souvenir hunters until the emergency services arrive and take responsibility for the security of the crash scene.
8. Having protected the casualty's privacy and, where necessary, isolated the scene of the crash, call the nearest police station at the number detailed in the Emergency Phone Number list for the event and give the receiving officer a synopsis of the situation. Due to the emotional stress in situations like these it is essential the SM writes down any instructions received from the police during the phone call.
9. Instruct two or more EDT members with voice recording phones to interview possible witnesses and ask for their details and what they believe they saw.
10. If there is an official photographer on site instruct them to immediately take photos of the site from as many different angles as possible including the likely lines of trajectory and especially the area where the vehicle left the track. If there is no photographer, the SM should designate a person or best of all do it themselves. The SM must be as knowledgeable as possible as they will be the key witness in later interviews.

11. If the fatality has been caused by a crash, the PA should now be used to advise the other participants that the rest of the event has been cancelled and they should start packing up and ready for departure but expect to be interviewed by police.
12. Send a second EDT member to the main gate to act as a pilot for the emergency service vehicles when they arrive.
13. Where 2 or more vehicles are involved in the incident find separate places for each of the drivers and their crews to sit in peace.
14. Instruct all members of the EDT not to talk to any journalists and if they do receive calls from unknown sources to state, “ I have no comments to make about the situation.”

The Situation Manager has now stabilised the situation and prepared the venue as best they can pending the arrival of the emergency services personnel. The best thing that can be done now is to look after the comfort of any close relatives or friends of the likely deceased person. Find a private place for them to sit and put supportive people with them.

The Situation Manger and EDT members will also need to be prepared to deal with the Journalists and Ghouls that have been listening in to the emergency radio channels or called in by the people on site looking for a cash reward. Give the EDT members guarding the main gate very strict instructions that they are not to allow these people through the gate or make any comments to them as they could be called to account for them in the Coroner’s court later.

Every situation will be different, so the following is a guide to what the Situation Manager should do once the situation has been stabilised; it is by no means final or exhaustive.

When dealing with Relatives:

1. This is the hardest part to manage with dignity and sincerity for the average person. If available, delegate it to somebody who has training in communicating bad news to people who will be emotionally disturbed by it. If you have someone available with those skills let them take control of this part of the process and introduce them to the area where the friends and relatives are housed at the venue.
2. If no one with this training is available, make sure you are as calm as possible before proceeding with talking to the friends or relatives who are at the venue. When you talk to the friends or relatives who are at the venue bear in mind that they are likely to be in some stage of shock and you need to be calm and not react to emotional outbursts.
3. If the emergency contact is not at the venue question them very gently about the emergency contact on the entry form and how they are likely to react to the news when you call them.
4. Try to get them to arrange for someone they know to go to the residence of the emergency contact to support them whilst they get over the initial shock.
5. If there are no relatives or friends at the venue telling the Next of Kin or emergency contact what has happened must be done ASAP – it is not fair to have them or other relatives find out about their loss on social media. The Police will usually go to the house as soon as they can but that can be some time depending on their workload in the area.

When dealing with the Police:

1. Introduce yourself to the senior officer immediately they arrive on site and have the Event Documentation set and the Incident Report Pack as soon as it is completed ready for their inspection. The senior officer will usually do a brief inspection of the

scene and then require a quiet room to interview the Situation Manager and witnesses.

2. Put all members of the EDT at their disposal for interviews. EDT members that did the interviews with the customers will provide the names of the various witnesses that are likely to assist the police with their enquiries.
3. Request the police to provide copy of any interview material for forwarding to RACERS for inclusion in the Incident Date Base to refine the RACERS Targetted Risk Assessment processes.
4. If the person is declared deceased by the ambulance officers, the police will have a list of qualified undertakers that can respond to the incident. It will take two hours and up to 4 hours for the undertakers to arrive and remove the deceased person.
5. Make sure that you have a mature and trusted member of the EDT in close proximity to the deceased person until they are removed from the site.

When dealing with the Ambulance officers:

1. The SMO will meet the ambulance officers at the Medical Centre if the injured person is there. If the injured person is still at the site of the incident, the SMO will then guide the ambulance officers to the site of the incident.
2. The SMO will describe all actions that have been taken by the Event Provider's medical response team to the ambulance officers.
3. Assuming the ambulance officers do detect life signs and/or can resuscitate the person sufficiently they will load and depart the premises. This process can take 30-60 minutes. If the person is still in the competition area you will not be able to resume the event until they depart the area.
4. The ambulance officers will make the decision as to whether they will remove the injured person from the site if life is extinct it is NOT their responsibility to remove the body. This means if there are no life signs or they are certain that they cannot resuscitate the person to transport them to a hospital the body will have to be removed by an undertaker.

When dealing with the undertakers:

1. Render what physical assistance you can. They are very professional and caring about the remains and will always do their best to treat the deceased person with respect.
2. Sometimes they will need manual assistance if the remains have to be moved over rough ground or through a gravel trap. Have people who are prepared to assist on standby for them.
3. They go about their job very quietly and will just depart quietly and as unobtrusively as possible.
4. Make sure they don't get their vehicle blocked in by "helpers".

When dealing with the other Participants and Officials:

1. At the earliest opportunity call a meeting and conduct a briefing about what has happened but DO NOT give any personal details about the injured person.
2. DO NOT go into any detail about what happened – just state the outcome as clearly and briefly as possible.
3. Advise what the impacts are likely to be on the rest of the day and how you intend to continue the event, assuming that you are,

## **Stage 2 Afterwards – The recovery.**

Looking after the Staff and volunteers:

1. PTSD is real, looking after the emotional state of your staff and officials is a key responsibility for an Event Provider after the event.
2. Ask the police for a reference to a local psychologist to address a meeting of all the people that were involved in the creation and delivery of the event. If they cannot recommend someone ask a GP for a referral to a suitably qualified practitioner.
3. Some of the people involved in the event will feel a guilt for the incident and their part in it. This needs to be addressed otherwise they are likely to suffer emotional stress for excessive lengths of time.

#### Dealing with the Coroner's office:

1. On most occasions the incident will not be brought before the Coroner's court if the Police and other investigating bodies have fully researched the incident and consider the outcomes and causes of the incident to be self-evident.
2. Where there is doubt arising from these investigations the Coroner's office will ask for more information about the incident to decide if it will be worth the court's time launching a full enquiry to establish all the circumstances of the incident.
3. The role of the Coroner is to discover what happened, why it happened, and how it might be prevented in the future. It does not apportion blame and it is not a criminal court and does not require legal representation although it might be advisable.
4. Be prepared to assist by taking along the photographs and witness statements which you gathered at the time of the incident.
5. A Coroner's finding is usually final but it can be appealed under special circumstances; however it is not unusual for the Coroner's office to continue to formally ask questions about an incident some years after the incident and/or its hearing. This is usually the result of a similar incident occurring a second time and the previous evidence might help with the understand and recommendations that will come from the Coroner's office.

#### Dealing with the press:

1. Prepare a professionally written statement for distribution about the incident and express regret that such a thing could happen. Explain how incidents of this nature will affect the lives of many people.
2. Everybody affected by the incident is entitled to their privacy at such a time and you should do your best to keep them shielded from wild speculation on social media and in the press that will help nobody.
3. Reinforce to the staff and volunteers that they are NOT permitted to speak to the press and all questions must be directed to the nominated executive who has the responsibility for the company's position and actions regarding the incident.
4. Circulate the written statement to all staff and journalists that request a copy of it.

#### For the Situation Manager:

It is important that you maintain a calm demeanour - at all times. This is not going to be easy when you have to deal with emotionally fraught situations that only a few professionals are trained to deal with. As much as possible watch, delegate and stand back. Solace come from doing something useful and the more you can find for others to do the calmer they will be. If you feel your heart rate is escalating or you're getting "shakey" go and find a quiet place for 5 minutes and move your thoughts onto relaxing topics for awhile. These situations can last for hours and be very exhausting – as the person in charge it is absolutely essential you manage your own wellbeing as well as the external situation that you have been pushed into.

#### **FINALLY:**

NEVER allow people to get into conversations about who might be to blame. This is the major cause of angst, recriminations and incorrect statements by witnesses who believe what they hear rather than what they did, and more importantly, did not see. Do your best to break up these conversations as soon as you see them beginning.

The police have highly trained specialists that will sort that out for everybody – **trust them!**

The system works – believe in it.