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Managing Risk at Outdoor Events

Parades and sponsored walks are a great way of bringing together large numbers of people, some of whom will be children, disabled or vulnerable. While this shouldn't be a problem, if you are planning an event it's worth considering any potential dangers and what you can do to prevent them from happening.

Where the event is being held and who is taking part will determine the degree of planning, supervision, control and resources you need to put in place. In most cases, all you need to do is consider realistically what could go wrong, what effect this could have on those present and what you need to do to prevent it. A general rule is focus on risks that could cause real harm and ignore the trivial.

A charity walk/parade checklist:

1. A minimum age of 16 years is preferable. If there are any younger people taking part they should be supervised by a parent or guardian, or by responsible adults.
2. Will the walk involve busy roads or relatively remote areas? Both will require certain controls, and in some cases may have to be notified to the police or local authority.
3. Try to ensure your route is suitable for people of all ages and physical ability – longer, more strenuous walks may put some people off from participating.
4. Walk the route in advance to see how long it takes and to check on the traffic and walking conditions.
5. Consider the availability of crossing places and rest stops.
6. If using road marshals, make sure they are easily identifiable, and consider how they will communicate with each other and with base, if necessary.
7. Advise walkers to wear suitable footwear and bright clothing to help drivers to see them. If walking in the dark, retro-reflective materials should be worn.
8. If you are using any vehicles in a supervisory capacity, make sure the drivers know they should not travel at slow speeds to match the pace of the walkers - this could cause an obstruction to other traffic.
9. For large groups start walking at intervals, rather than on mass.
10. Finally make sure that all the participants have clear information about start and finish times and locations, the route, safety advice and emergency procedures.

Other events

1. If you're planning a street party or outdoors community event, it's fairly common and legal to block off a street(s) - your local highway authority should be able to help you with this.
2. All your council needs is a few weeks' notice (most councils only need 4 to 6 weeks) of where and when the closure will take place so they can plan around it (for example, so they can let the emergency services know) and put in place a traffic regulation order.
3. By law you are not required to be charged for a road closure; if your council is requesting a fee, you have every right to challenge it and to ask the council to cover the cost for social benefit.
4. In terms of props, some councils will lend you road signs and cones for your event, or you can hire them.
5. If you're using a village hall or similar venue consider the layout of the space to ensure people and vehicles can move about safely and free from trip hazards. If lots of people are expected to attend, entrances and exits must be managed to prevent overcrowding.

My top tips:

1. Don't take unnecessary risks when putting up and taking down large marquees - it may be sensible to use the company it is hired from to do this.
2. If you're hiring structures like bouncy castles or fairground rides, make sure they have an up-to-date inspection certificate and that they are properly tethered and used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and guidance. You must ensure that all operators are adequately trained and aware of the risks
3. Always remember to have a qualified first-aider on site.
4. Whatever type of event it may be, plan an alternative in case the weather deteriorates, or other factors affect people's safety on the day.
5. Despite general assumption, health and safety law does not, generally, impose duties upon someone who is not an employer, self-employed or an employee (although civil law may apply).
6. There's no law that says you must buy insurance for a voluntary or community event – but you might want to do so to ensure you are covered if something goes wrong and someone makes a claim against you. Having public liability insurance may give you peace of mind, but remember it's good planning, not insurance that stops things going wrong.

This material came from thirdsector.co.uk. It was so well put together I couldn't improve on it.

Daryl Martin – October 2018

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