Safer music event guidelines: improving safety and reducing harms at music events

Overview

There are several health and safety risks particular to music festivals and events including effects relating to; continuous dancing, noise, raised body temperature, dehydration, alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, assault, extreme weather conditions, emergency and first-aid access and other risks associated with the location of the event. Safer music events are beneficial to promoters and organisers, as well as the festival goers themselves. Event organisers can improve safety and reduce harm at music events. Proper planning, management and collaboration between event organisers and representatives of all relevant agencies can help minimise health and safety risks, and reduce the likelihood of harms.

Music events in scope for these guidelines are those typically held in an entertainment venue (either indoor or outdoor) with a diverse range of continuous music, including nightclubs that hold regular music events and outdoor festivals.

The safer music event guidelines summarise important considerations when organising and running a music event. These include essential strategies that seek to improve public safety and health at events, such as:

- The provision of shade and 'chill-out areas' at events to provide well ventilated, cool and quieter spaces for patrons to rest and recover, supervised by a staff member with First-Aid training;

- Monitoring patrons throughout the venue and identifying where patrons may require first aid assistance;

- The availability of free drinking water at multiple locations within events that is easy to access;

- Dedicated, signed, equipped and accessible First- Aid locations;

- Safe transport options to and from the event; and

- Organisers planning events early with emergency services, including the SA Ambulance Service and SA Police, to discuss any risks and implement strategies to reduce these risks.

Thorough planning is essential for safer music events. Event organisers must identify, assess and control risks, seek approvals, inform agencies (including emergency services), address legal and management issues as well as meet all legal obligations well in advance of hosting events. This will assist event organisers to maintain their 'duty of care' to minimise any potential risks associated with their music event.

The safer music event guidelines will assist event organisers to comply with their commitments and provide safer music events. The guidelines will also provide agencies who engage event organisers with guidance by highlighting key points to consider, and provide pointers for patrons as to what to expect for a safer event.

Safer music events guidelines

Basic safety

- Consider providing patrons with a site map providing details of exits, toilets, First-Aid, food and water.
- Toilet facilities should be adequate and able to accommodate the number of patrons attending. (Regular cleaning and re-supply of consumables to the facilities should also be a priority action)
- Ensure exits are clearly identified, well lit, easily located, and kept clear on both sides of the exit door. Doors should be able to be opened without a key.
- Access to dangerous sites (such as balconies/speaker boxes) should be restricted.
- Ensure that all spaces within the event environment are monitored regularly, including the perimeter, and provide first aid assistance to any patrons requiring attention.
- To address the issue of drink spiking, inform patrons that unattended drinks will be cleared.
- Check electrical systems for safe operation.
- Where possible, glass drinkware should be avoided
- Provide bins and regularly remove broken glass and rubbish.
- Ensure visibility is adequate at all times – provide adequate lighting and limit the use of smoke machines, especially in basements.
- Keep all thoroughfares clear at all times.
- Ensure noise impacts resulting from the event are minimised and meet relevant requirements, including limiting noise output to avoid hearing damage of staff and patrons and consider the impact on nearby residents. Consider selling earplugs to patrons and providing earplugs to staff. Check with local councils for obligations regarding noise impact.
- Ensure fire service consultation occurs well in advance and follow fire safety advice. Marquees should be treated with a fire retardant substance.
- Consider producing a Medical Response Plan that covers Drug and Alcohol strategies etc.
- Emergency Response Plan and Risk Assessment should be completed for the event.

Temperature and ventilation

- Temperature control and ventilation systems must work and be able to handle the maximum capacity of the event.
- Ensure that temperature and ventilation are monitored and controlled for the comfort and safety of attendees.
- Consider dress codes that allow patrons to be appropriately dressed for the conditions.
- If possible, provide a secure cloakroom for the safe storage of additional clothing removed during the event.
- Plan ahead for a range of weather conditions for outdoor events, including contingency plans for extreme weather conditions to prevent hypothermia and exposure such as a policy for 'heatwave' temperature levels. Ensure that adequate shade and 'chill out' areas are provided at the event and provide free drinking water at multiple locations.

Chill-out areas

- It is essential that a 'chill-out area' (an area for patrons to rest and recover) is provided at the venue. This area should be accessible to emergency services and continuously supervised by a staff member with First-Aid training.
- 'Chill-out areas' should be well ventilated and maintained at a cool temperature, well lit, provide adequate seating, be quieter than dance areas and accessible from outside the venue, as an ambulance/ambulance officer should be able to access the venue and reach the location freely (without going through the crowd).
- Free drinking water must be available in the 'chill-out area'.
- Consider the provision of phone charging stations to support safety.

Availability of drinking water and food

- To address potential heat exhaustion and dehydration among patrons, ensure that free drinking water is readily available at multiple locations that are easy to access by patrons.
- Never shut off drinking water supplies at the event.
- Consider providing food for patrons at the venue and ensure that it is hygienically prepared, stored and served. For guidance and advice regarding the sale of food contact your local council (see Useful Contacts). Penalties may apply for the non-sanctioned sale of food. Signage to identify food and water locations is recommended.

Alcohol licensing

- A liquor licence must be obtained to sell or supply alcohol, including an 'all inclusive' ticket.
- Alcohol can only be sold or supplied under certain circumstances by law. All liquor licenses are subject to compliance with the Commissioner's codes of practice. Alcohol must only be provided responsibly and must not be served to intoxicated patrons.
- Ensure the safe service of alcohol if authorised by a licence. It is unlawful for liquor to be sold or supplied to a minor and significant penalties apply.
- Licensees must ensure that they have a risk assessment management plan. No promotion of rapid or excessive consumption of alcohol (ie buckets, shots etc).
- Event organisers who wish to sell alcohol should contact Consumer and Business Services (see Useful Contacts).
- If conducting an unlicensed event, ensure that no alcohol is brought into the venue.

Smoking

- Event organisers need to be familiar with the laws around smoking and the sale of tobacco products:
    - o Smoking is not permitted in enclosed areas or outdoor dining areas (see Useful Contacts for tobacco laws information).
    - o To reduce harm from passive smoking, event organisers should consider making their event smoke-free or having designated smoking areas.
    - o Funding conditions attached to any government funding may require venues to be smoke-free.
    - o A retail tobacco licence must be obtained if tobacco products are sold at an event (see Useful Contacts).

Venue capacity and crowd management

- Venue capacity and crowd management is the event organisers responsibility.
- Never exceed the maximum capacity of the venue – speak to the local council for guidance.
- Access and egress locations/systems should be determined taking into consideration expected patron numbers and security expectations (searches etc)
- Ensure bottlenecking or narrowing of crowd movement is avoided.
- Continually monitor the number of patrons during the event, ensuring that overcrowding does not occur. Significant penalties may apply. Consider using 'crowd care' staff to monitor crowds and identify where patrons may require first-aid assistance.
- Avoid localised overcrowding within and outside the venue, especially in areas where people may congregate and in 'chill-out areas'.
- Consider providing security in the immediate area surrounding the venue to facilitate safe access to and from the venue for patrons.
- Staff should allow efficient venue access and strive to create a supportive environment for patrons, free from hostility.
- Do not sell tickets to the event before the venue is finalised and consultation has occurred with relevant agencies, as a change in venue may mean a change in venue capacity.
- Ensure that intoxicated patrons are evicted safely to supported and well-lit areas (ensuring people are not left at increased risk in vulnerable spaces) and that their first aid needs are met.

Security / door staff

- Security and door staff should be licensed, clearly identifiable, trained and briefed on areas relevant to their roles at the event.
- Security and door staff should be aware of:
  - safety/First-Aid provisions
  - the need for security to monitor in the vicinity of toilet facilities
  - emergency evacuation procedures/ designated exits
  - appropriate responses to medical emergencies (including overdose, heat stroke, collapse and seizure)
  - the need to report accidents/ incidents to venue management and to maintain an incident register
  - assisting persons who may be experiencing unwanted attention or interactions from others.

Communication systems

- Reliable communication systems (preferably utilising headsets) are essential.
- Communication systems should be operational throughout the event and should not be dependent on mains power (in case of power failure).
- Effective communication links should be established between security, venue staff, First-Aid and relevant agencies (police, ambulance and fire service). The key First-Aider should be on the same communications network as security. If utilising 'crowd-care' staff, ensure they are also linked to the communications network.
- In an emergency, always call 000 for assistance. Be clear on the service required (police, fire or ambulance) and the location (if you are using a mobile telephone you will be asked for the city and state you are in).
- For larger events, an Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) should be considered to ensure proper and timely liaison / problem solving across all attending agencies/services.

First-Aid / medical emergency

- First-Aid provision is essential at the event – ensure adequate coverage based on the projected number of attendees. Contact the SA Ambulance Service for advice (see Useful Contacts).
- First-Aid should be provided by individuals possessing a First-Aid certificate obtained from a registered First-Aid training provider, or by current emergency health professionals (emergency department nurse, ambulance officer or doctor).
- A dedicated First-Aid location is essential (a First-Aid tent is ideal for outdoor venues) and should be:
    - away from the main thoroughfare
    - well-lit
    - accessible from outside the venue, as an ambulance/ambulance officer should be able to access the venue and reach the First-Aid location freely (without going through the crowd)
    - clearly identified by signage as a First-Aid area
    - be quiet enough to hear breathing.

- It is best to call an ambulance if in doubt but as a guide, seek medical assistance if a person is:
    - complaining of shortness of breath, dizziness, pounding or racing heartbeat, or chest pain
    - drowsy and cannot be roused
    - behaving abnormally (e.g. confused, disoriented)
- Consider providing the following:
    - General First-Aid equipment (such as a standard First-Aid kit) adequate for the size of event
    - free fluids (for oral rehydration)
    - oxygen
    - automated external defibrillator
- In case of medical emergency the best response is to call the ambulance service early. Some patrons may be resistant to ambulance assistance for fear of police involvement with illicit drug related illness. Police may attend to ensure safety, to assist the ambulance officers, investigate a drug overdose or if there is aggression/violence reported at the scene. Any subsequent investigation into an overdose event will focus on the source of the drugs and not the individual patron's possession and consumption.
- For emergency attendance phone 000
- It is important to be aware that friends/associates of a person in a medical emergency may be concerned about repercussions related to the emergency, including illicit drug use. They may display unhelpful behaviours such as:
    - trying to give the person excessive amounts of water
    - panicking
    - trying to avoid saying what has happened
    - telling the affected person not to talk
- It is important to remind friends/associates that not telling emergency staff, including first-aid staff and the police may result in the person sustaining further harm or potentially dying, depending on their condition.

Community education

- Safer partying information can be provided on event websites, ticketing and other promotional material or electronic display signs informing attendees on risk reduction strategies and provide health and safety messages (i.e. illicit drug overdose warnings, hearing protection, safe sex, awareness of sexual assault, preparing for forecast weather including being sun-smart, recommended level of fluid consumption, risks associated with alcohol and other drug use, and looking after your friends).
- Event staff can be provided with information on risk management (including alcohol and other drug risk management), identifying affected persons' signs and symptoms, and responses. There are some groups that provide party safe information including staffing or volunteers, check with council for availability of such groups in the area of the event.
- 'Crowd care' staff can engage at-risk patrons to identify where assistance may be required and provide information to patrons to reduce risks.
- Staff can be engaged by event organisers to identify attendees that may require support or assistance.
- Conditions of Entry documents/signage should state clearly that Non prescription drug / substance use is illegal. Any patron found breaching state legislation faces immediate removal from the venue and no refunds. Inappropriate behaviour will also not be tolerated, with removal and barring from the venue also a possibility. Highlight patron code of conduct. What can and can't be brought into the event.

Cleaning up

- Event organisers must ensure that the venue is left clean and tidy following a party.
- Cleaning up may be done by contractors or the organising team.
- Consider obtaining sharps disposal containers and safe handling advice in case needles and syringes are found – call the Needle Clean Up Hotline for further info (see Useful Contacts).

Transport options, traffic management and signage

- Arranging transport to and from the venue for patrons is essential, especially if the venue is isolated. Informing taxi and ride sharing companies of the event can reduce traffic problems and minimise the risks of people driving while under the influence of alcohol and other drugs or when fatigued.
- Adequate, well-lit parking including the path to the parking area is also well-lit should be provided close to the venue – check with the local council and the police (see Useful Contacts).
- Avoid venue access routes that pass through quiet streets.
- If considering signage for the event, seek appropriate approval prior to fixing signs on a public space – contact the local council (see Useful Contacts).
- Patrons should be encouraged to plan safe transport options to and from the event.

Insurance

- Arrange comprehensive insurance coverage well before the event and find out what liabilities there may be – ensure that legal/licensing requirements are complied with.

Community consultation

- Consider keeping the community informed about the event to avoid potential hassles. Make a contact number available for the public to find out more about the event.
- Adelaide City Council's Event Noise Mitigation Standard Operating Procedure provides templates and guidance on community consultation and pre-event advice for larger scale events in the Park Lands.
- Consider obtaining feedback from the community and relevant agencies following the event. Evaluation may be useful for organising future events.
- Pre- and post-event briefings with the organising team and any partner agencies will also help deliver successful events.
- Conditions may be imposed on liquor licences that limit the type of entertainment and times that entertainment may be conducted to ensure the amenity of an area is maintained.

Agency consultation

Event organisers should consult with relevant agencies (listed below) prior to the event on a range of key issues including:
  o event details, logistics and a venue plan
  o communication equipment and processes
  o staffing arrangements
  o emergency responses, access routes and venue facilities for emergency service personnel, vehicles and equipment
  o First-Aid details.

Serious incidents

In the event of a serious incident the priority must be the health and welfare of an affected person. It is also important to consider what evidence may be present to inform a possible Coroner's inquiry or criminal investigation.

Consider that forensic evidence may be present:
  o Where possible do not pick up things that may provide evidence such as illicit substances, mobile phones, water bottles, the victim's property and the like.
  o Designate someone, preferably security, to maintain observations on the items and when police arrive advise them what was located, where it was and the name, address and phone number of the person who was maintaining observations on the property.
  o Be aware that a 'serious incident' could require the closure of the event and as such, event plans should include contingencies to deal with such a possibility.

Useful Contacts

Police
SA Police Attendance: 131 444
Please contact the local police station in the area where the event will be held (see White Pages), prior to conducting the event and ask for the Planning Officer.

Ambulance: South Australian Ambulance Service
For advice phone: 136 272

Fire Service
For inner city and metropolitan events, please contact SA Metropolitan Fire Service Major Events Officer phone: 8204 3611

For country and rural events: SA Country Fire Service Partners and Business Unit phone: 8212 9858
Please visit the CFS website for further information about where the safer settlement line ends (metropolitan Adelaide) and what is considered a CFS response area.
http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/

Local Councils
Contact the local council in the region the event will be held.
Visit the Local Government Association website for contact information about local councils www.lga.sa.gov.au/

Consumer and Business Services
Visit the Consumer and Business Services website www.cbs.sa.gov.au
Phone: 131 882

Office of the Technical Regulator
To ensure that electrical, gas & plumbing/sanitary regulations are complied with visit www.sa.gov.au/otr

Tobacco Laws
Visit the SA Health website for information about tobacco laws
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/tobaccolaws

Alcohol and Drug Information Service / Needle Clean Up Hotline
Phone: 1300 13 1340
8.30am to 10pm every day

For more information

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)
Phone: 1300 13 1340
Confidential telephone counselling
and information
8.30am to 10pm every day.
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/dassa