

*Signature*  
**BOSTON**

Remarkable experiences.  
Imagination realized.



# *Safety and Security Lessons*

*from the 2013 Boston Marathon and  
the 2015 Pokémon World Championship*



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## About Us

### *Massachusetts Convention Center Authority (MCCA)*

The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority owns and operates the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center (BCEC), the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center (Hynes), and The Lawn On D, and owns the Signature Boston brand.

### *Boston Convention Marketing Center (BCMC)*

The Boston Convention Marketing Center (BCMC) is a joint effort of the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority and the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau (GBCVB) to market and sell the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center and The Lawn On D. The BCMC is your single point of contact for event requirement submissions, hotel room blocks, facility contracts and site visits.

### *Signature Boston*

Signature Boston is the name for Boston's convention and meetings experience, and includes the MCCA, BCMC, GBCVB, and our partners in Boston's hospitality community.

## Abstract

In the past decade, there have been a significant number of terrorist attacks in the U.S. and around the world. Since 2015, there have been more than a thousand incidents of various magnitude in the Western Hemisphere alone.

While these types of emergencies can happen across multiple industries, the event industry is especially vulnerable as mass gatherings are a prime target for attackers due to the concentrations of crowds, prominent speakers and entertainers, and oftentimes increased media exposure.

## Introduction

This white paper is based on a presentation given by MCCA Chief Information Security Officer, Robert Noonan, on October 12, 2017 as part of IAEE's Lunch & Learn series at the BCEC.

His talk focused on the lessons learned from two major events that took place in Boston: the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing and the 2015 Pokémon World Championship, where the Boston Police and the MCCA Public Safety Team successfully prevented a mass shooting at the Hynes Convention Center.

In Boston, we believe that sharing best practices and learning from each other's experience is the key to event success and attendee satisfaction across the board. With that in mind, we developed the following document to provide a deeper look into the two events mentioned above, as well as a discussion of lessons learned, best practices, current venue and event security trends, and more.

## Case Study

# 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing

### Overview

The Boston Marathon is an annual marathon, held on Patriots' Day, the third Monday of April. It is the world's oldest annual marathon and one of the best-known road racing events. Its course runs from Hopkinton in southern Middlesex County to Copley Square in Boston.

The event attracts 500,000 spectators each year making it New England's most widely viewed sporting event. On average, more than 30,000 registered runners enter the Boston Marathon each year.

### Marathon Pre-Race Activities

All marathon runners pick up their bibs for the race at the Sports & Fitness Expo, which has taken place at the Hynes Convention Center in the last eight years, up until 2018. The Hynes is located at 900 Boylston Street, along the race route three blocks from the Boston Marathon finish line at Copley Square.

The number of event attendees in 2013 was approximately 30,000 a day, which included 23,000 marathon runners, as well as friends and family members.

### Marathon Day – April 15, 2013

The day of the Marathon is an observed holiday (Patriot's Day) for the State of Massachusetts, including the MCCA, which is a State Authority. The MCCA traditionally supports the Marathon by providing space to first responders in the Hynes building.

On Marathon Day, most of the Sports & Fitness Expo had already moved out of the building and law enforcement teams that are not visible at the street level were hosted inside the Hynes.

### MOUNTAINS OF EVIDENCE

Due to heavy traffic and road closures, the only guaranteed way for runners to get to the starting point in Hopkinton is by taking the official Boston Athletic Association (B.A.A.) buses from Boston Common.

Most runners leave their bags and equipment on the Common, as they have to return to that area once they have finished the race.

When the two bombs went off, there were more than 20,000 different bags sitting in the bag storage area on the Common and everything was deemed suspicious.

When the attacks began at around 2:50 pm, the Hynes immediately began to absorb all the people running from Boylston Street. At first, MCCA public safety efforts focused on opening the doors of the venue and turning it into a shelter, which is often the case with similar large spaces.

However, since this was potentially the first terrorist attack on U.S. soil since 9/11, the Boston Police Department (BPD) ordered the evacuation of the venue. The entire area was essentially within a crime scene and everything had to be preserved.

Less than half an hour later, the venue was evacuated, locked and secured, and people were called back outside of the crime zone.

Boston's first responders utilized every resource that was available. Even the MCCA's explosive-sniffing K-9s, part of their public safety program, were put into action by law enforcement. It is important to note that during this emergency, MCCA Public Safety Team members were unable to speak directly to each other, as the cell network in Boston was overloaded.

The team had to quickly adapt their communication plan, and communicate with key stakeholders solely via text messages.

At around 5:30 pm, the MCCA Public Safety Team received a call from the BPD asking for the Hynes to be opened again.

The plan was to store all the initial evidence and crime scene information at the Hynes before it was sent to Quantico, Virginia early the next morning.

At that point, MCCA operations needed to morph and be prepared to support not only the move-out of the Sports & Fitness Expo, but also the efforts of the city's first responders to collect evidence.

## MONDAY OVERVIEW

- MCCA recognized holiday
- BCEC: move out for Specialty Coffee
- Hynes: move out for Sports & Fitness Expo
- Traffic at the Boston Common Garage (BCG) is very heavy due to the Marathon
- 2:50 PM: two Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) detonated near the Boston Marathon Finish Line

## IMMEDIATE ACTION

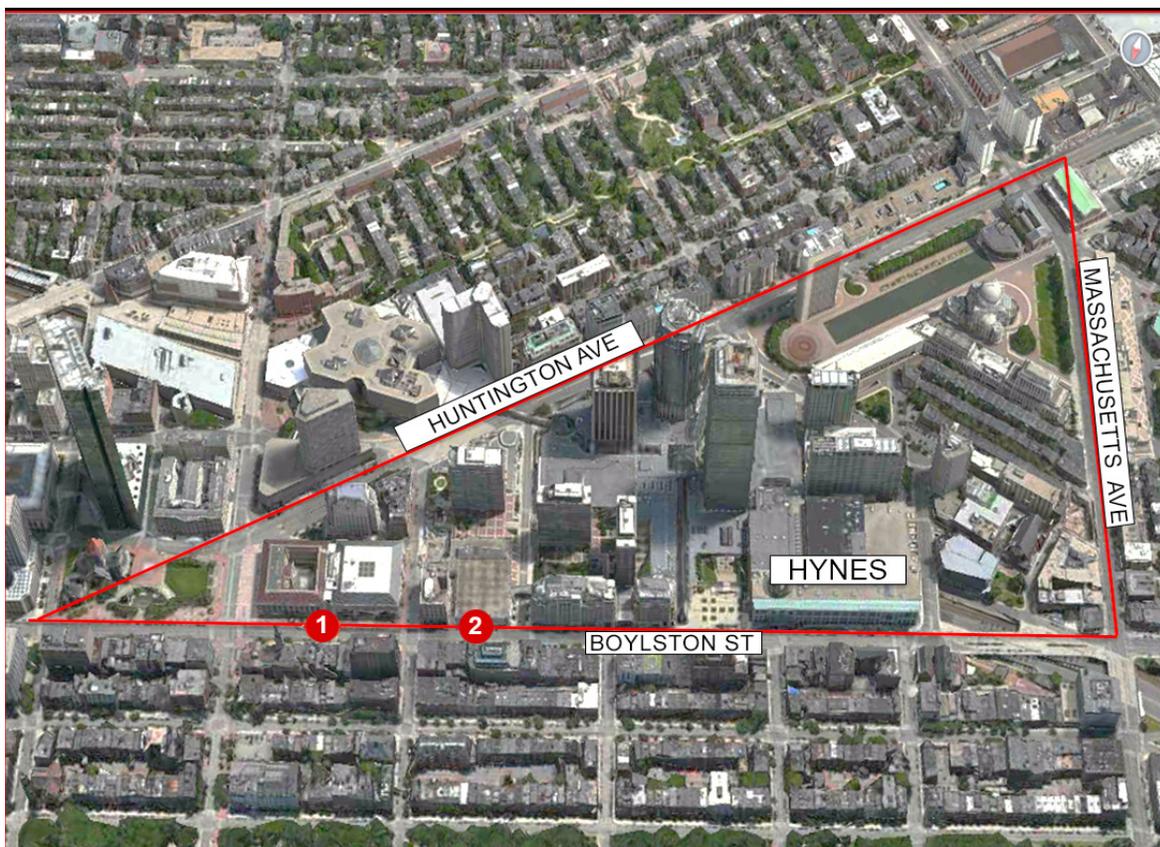
- BPD orders Hynes to evacuate
- Hynes evacuates within 22 minutes
- MCCA deploys EOD K9 teams and additional public safety staff to the Boston Common Garage (BCG) and the BCEC
- BPD requests use of Hynes as evidence collection point
- Additional K9 Teams deployed to BCEC & Hynes
- MCCA assists via redeployment of staff back to Hynes and operates facility remotely from BCEC
- 18-block section of the Back Bay shuts down to all pedestrian and vehicular traffic

The MCCA Public Safety Team supported first responders by providing them with valuable video material from the crime scene. The MCCA has a very robust surveillance network, which captured video along Dalton Street and down Boylston Street. Information from before and after the attack could be extracted from this footage.

The initial crime scene spanned the Back Bay neighborhood, one of Boston's busiest commercial and residential districts, which is densely populated by businesses, financial institutions, hotels and residential buildings, and is a bustling area for tourists. An 18-block section of the Back Bay, bordered by Boylston Street, Massachusetts Avenue, and Huntington Avenue (the red triangle shown in the aerial photo on the right) was shut down and tenants were prevented from entering their properties.

Copley Square and the 18-block crime scene area of the Back Bay were reopened on Wednesday, April 24, more than a week after the attacks took place.

In that moment, it was extremely important for Boston as a city to create the narrative that even after such a horrific event, the city was up and running. In fact, the Hynes was able to open and begin move-in for its next event merely 24 hours after the attacks took place.



Overview - Initial Crime Scene; 1. and 2. indicate the two explosion sites

Largely, this was possible because of the relationships the MCCA had cultivated with first responders. They were aware of the MCCA's public safety program and understood the resources that were put in place to ensure that all the crime scene information was preserved and that there would not be any interruption or interference with the investigation.

First responders recognized that the MCCA needed to demonstrate on a federal and state level, and from an industry perspective, that the Hynes and the BCEC were open for business and people shouldn't hesitate to come to Boston or wonder whether they would be safe if they did.

As horrible as Marathon Monday was, it made the MCCA's collective teams go into an operational, procedural-focused mindset. The MCCA Public Safety Team, due to their preparation and training, could compartmentalize tasks and get ready for action. For each procedure, like evacuating or securing the venue, they had a plan in place that was followed precisely.

### *Boston Manhunt – April 19, 2013*

On Friday, April 19, 2013 a manhunt took place to find the two bombing suspects, Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev.



#### FRIDAY OVERVIEW

- BCEC: Move-in for the Experimental Biology Annual Meeting. Exhibitor registration to open at 1 P.M.
- Hynes: Move-in for the Ambulatory Surgery Center.
- Comic-Con move in later in the morning.
- Normal traffic flow at BCG.

#### IMMEDIATE ACTION

- Early in the morning, police encounter the bombing suspects. One suspect is killed in the shoot-out that occurs, while the other suspect evades capture.
- The search for the second suspect extends into Watertown and Boston.
- Governor Deval Patrick issues a shelter in place order for Watertown, Boston and surrounding towns.
- The MCCA Public Safety Team establishes contact with MCCA Executive Staff.
- Security at Hynes, the BCEC and the BCG is increased
- EOD K9 teams deployed to MCCA Boston facilities
- Experimental Biology exhibitor registration is postponed in response to shelter in place order.
- Suspect is captured in the early evening in Watertown

The City of Boston and surrounding towns were ordered to shelter in place. There was an element of martial law in place across the entire city and even the region.

The suspect was captured Friday evening in Watertown (approx. 8 miles west from Boston).

During the manhunt, the MCCA's top priority was to establish good communication with clients and to inform them of any new developments, but more importantly, inform them of when something was unknown or nothing had changed.

It was critical for all sides to stay in close touch with first responders and to understand their concerns. Communicating closely with clients was just as important. A coordinated message needed to be provided to the public.

The MCCA also recognized the need to be in constant contact with the surrounding hotel community, where our convention attendees were staying, and with our transportation partners who were providing transportation services to attendees.

The area where the MCCA recognized its own less-than-optimal performance was in communicating with its own employees. The MCCA Executive and Operations Teams were so focused on securing the venue, and communicating with first responders, clients, hotels, and transportation partners, that communicating to employees inadvertently became less of a priority.

Effective internal communication can have an enormous impact on employees' safety, productivity, and faith in the organization. Keeping employees in the loop ensures that they stay focused on their tasks rather than discussing the crisis at hand. Transparency also affects their level of trust in the organization and willingness to return to work when the crisis is over. In our *Lessons Learned* section ahead, we share some helpful tips for effective communication during crisis.

In conclusion, the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing taught us many valuable lessons and shaped up our overall emergency preparedness and crisis response strategy. Two years later, at the Pokémon World Championship, this new plan of action was put to the test.

## Case Study

# 2015 Pokémon World Championship

### Overview

The Pokémon World Championships is an event that occurs annually in August and features the best Pokémon Trading Card Game (TCG) and video game players from around the world. Players compete for monetary prizes, the title of Pokémon World Champion, and invitations for the following year's event. Compared to other events that the MCCA hosts, the Pokémon World Championship is in the same category as Comic Con, Anime, and the Penny Arcade Expo (PAX).

For the Pokemon World Championships, attendees are mainly young people between the ages of 13-24, many of whom are parents bringing their children to the event.

### Event Assessment & Security Planning

At our facilities in Boston, we use a tier-based system to conduct event assessments and give the appropriate threat level (low/medium/high) to each event. Based on this assessment, the MCCA Public Safety Team develops a customized strategy for each event.

After checking in with the venue that hosted the Pokémon World Championship the previous year, the Public Safety Team was mostly concerned about incidents of theft, medical emergencies, lost children, etc. Thus, the plan and the level of staffing that they put in place was geared mostly towards safety-related issues. With about 3,000 attendees, the Pokémon event did not score high on its level of threat, and it was initially expected that it wouldn't need a hard barrier of security.

However, about six hours prior to the opening, the client notified the Public Safety Team about a potential threat that came into the event via social media.

After conducting a search through one of their systems, the Public Safety Team discovered a series of threats specifically to the event and individuals within the event, as well as pictures and videos of weapons, accompanied by disturbing messages.

The threats came from two individuals from Iowa – James Austin Stumbo and Kevin Norton. As they were travelling to Boston, they were stopping along the way to show videos of themselves firing their weapons. The MCCA took this information very seriously, and shared it with first responders who expressed the same concerns. Boston Police agreed that something was in fact going on and thought the venue's security should be ramped up for the event.

With only six hours left until the event opening, the MCCA Public Safety Team started working on an entirely new safety and security plan.

One of the challenges facing the MCCA Public Safety Team and BPD was dealing with was the lack of certainty surrounding the plotters' location and true intentions as 100% of the information they had came from social media.

Behind the scenes they were trying to determine whether Stumbo and Norton, in fact left Iowa and how exactly they were travelling to Boston.

Boston's first responders were looking through the manifested airplanes that were flying into the city, as well as where Stumbo and Norton were passing last based on their DMV and E-ZPass information, in case they were driving.

There was also a third person associated with these two individuals, a militant from Iowa who was on an FBI watch list. The state troopers in Iowa confirmed that the third individual did not leave his home, but the other two did and they were on their way to Boston.

Therefore, about two hours before the event registration opened, the MCCA Public Safety Team and BPD knew that there was a high probability that Stumbo and Norton would show up at the Pokémon event.

The MCCA not only had to change the security plan for the event, but they had to come up with a way to address attendees' questions as security was going to look very different compared to previous years.

When the event opened at about four o'clock that afternoon, several Hynes Public Safety Managers were monitoring the registration areas. They worked up a plan with the show to be notified when the two individuals came in, so that they could come to the scene and identify them. That was another challenge for the team, as they only had a two-dimensional picture of the plotters.

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook post and its comment thread. The post is from James Austin Stumbo, dated July 30 at 1:15am. The text of the post reads: "Boys an girls this is going to be a guns and stripper weekend!!!". Below the post is a screenshot of an email from Brad Johnson, dated July 29, 2015 at 6:10 PM. The email subject is "Nationals Stipends Have Been Processed!" and the body text says: "I am very happy to announce that your stipend check has been processed and it is on its way to you now! Keep an eye out for it to arrive in the next week or so. Thank you for your patience and for all of your support this past season! Thanks, Brad Johnson, Pokemon Organized Play". Below the email screenshot are 9 likes and 5 comments. The comment thread includes:
 

- John Kettler: "Too bad they aren't giving these out as bearer checks (checks you can sign to anyone) with a big Pikachu face on them. Otherwise you could do this: Dancer: 'Hey baby u wanna dance...' See More" (July 30 at 5:00am, 1 like)
- James Austin Stumbo: "I'd rather just give her a 1, instead of 1000" (July 30 at 7:10am, 1 like)
- Kevin Norton: "But imagine would she would do for 1000 I approve of pokemans funding strip clubs" (July 30 at 7:40am, 1 like)
- Adrian Montoya: "Strippers and blow. Get it right." (July 30 at 7:53am, 1 like)
- James Austin Stumbo: "Thank you Pokemon for my new assault rifle" (July 30 at 11:25am, 1 like)

 Below the comment thread is a post from James Austin Stumbo, dated August 19, with the text: "Kevin Norton and I are ready for worlds Boston here we come!!!". This post has 2 likes and 3 comments:
 

- Joey Faux: "Good luck!" (August 19 at 12:25pm, 1 like)
- Kevin Norton: "With killing the competition?" (August 19 at 12:27pm, 1 like)
- Joey Faux: "Haha yes" (August 19 at 12:27pm, 1 like)

Facebook posts by the plotters James Austin Stumbo and Kevin Norton

When the two individuals arrived, they came in from two different entrances. Usually, when people come with a friend, they come in together, so the way Norton and Stumbo acted was very concerning from a security standpoint. It looked like they were conducting some kind of a dry run.

They went to two different registration lines and were almost immediately pulled out by the MCCA Public Safety Team. Shortly after, BPD stepped in and started asking them questions.

In the course of the conversation, one of the individuals admitted to having the type of weaponry shown on Facebook earlier. After locating their vehicle, law enforcement found a 12-gauge Remington shotgun, a DPM5 Model AR-15 rifle, several hundred rounds of ammunition, and a hunting knife with no license to carry them. BPD issued an arrest warrant for James Stumbo and Kevin Norton, and they were taken into custody.

In an official [statement](#) BPD Bureau of Intelligence and Analysis Commander Superintendent Paul Fitzgerald, said "The relationship between police and private sector security is important in both our community policing philosophy, as well as our counter-terrorism strategy. This incident is a good example of private security reaching out to their local Boston police district and relaying information to detectives and BRIC analysts in order to identify the very real threat. The BPD detectives and collaborating agencies did a great job in the prevention of a potential tragedy."

In that scenario, the client's decision to share this critical information played an important role in preventing a violent incident from happening.

Oftentimes, clients might doubt the validity of such threats and as a result they are hesitant to share this type of information further. Another common concern is the anticipated negative impact to their event brand.



**Tanner Menzel and 2 others** like this.



**Jack Blythe**

Columbine pt 2

Wed at 10:34 AM · Like



**James Austin Stumbo**

Don't worry about it

Wed at 10:36 AM · Like · 1



**Jack Blythe**

Just don't get mad when you lose the auto win 😊

Wed at 11:19 AM · Like



**James Austin Stumbo**

My AR-15 says you lose

Wed at 1:21 PM · Like



**Jack Blythe**

Another Boston massacre

Wed at 1:28 PM · Like



**Townley Thompson**

Some would say too soon

Wed at 2:24 PM · Like



**Townley Thompson**

Some are not me

Wed at 2:24 PM · Like · 2

*Facebook posts by one of the plotters  
James Austin Stumbo*

Throughout the operation and planning phases for each event that we are hosting, our Public Safety Team is focused on opening up a dialogue with the client and creating trust. That starts with asking the right questions and developing a safety and security plan based on that information.

Planning and event assessment are discussed further in the Venue & Event Trends in Safety and Security section.



*Weapons and ammunition seized from Stumbo and Norton (Boston Police)*

# Lessons Learned

## *Crisis Communication is Key*

Effective communication is your number one weapon in any emergency and the best way to ensure good communication is by crafting a crisis communication plan well in advance of any event.

Based on our experience hosting hundreds of events of all sizes, we have created a framework of basic communication principles to help you develop an effective crisis communication plan or refine your existing one.

### 1. DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE

In any crisis, there are people who need to know and people who want to know. The people who need to know are those directly affected by the crisis: your staff members, exhibitors, attendees, vendors, etc. They should be prioritized in your communication efforts.

### 2. ESTABLISH CRISIS THRESHOLDS AND ACTION PLANS

Not all incidents are equal and they require different approach depending on their level of urgency and impact. Before your event, categorize potential incidents and come up with a communication strategy for each category.

**Minor incidents** – anticipated and routine (medical emergencies, property damage, theft); can be resolved internally without involving unaffected stakeholders; small target audience for communications

**Moderate incidents** – more impactful (weather-related emergencies, fire, power outages); need to notify additional people (all attendees, exhibitors and external partners; more people within your organization)

**Major events** – very significant, unexpected; need to communicate to an even larger group often including media and the public

### 3. HAVE PRE-APPROVED COMMUNICATION TEMPLATES

During an emergency, the need to communicate is immediate and going back to your legal team to ask for approvals of communications may cause serious delays in your crisis response. Instead, sit together prior to the potential emergency and get the communication templates approved in a non-stressful way. Focus on your target audiences, and develop templates with each audience in mind.

#### 4. LEVERAGE STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS

Think about who can help get the message out faster and more efficiently. For example, your general service contractors (GSC) have great connectivity to your exhibitor base because of how they logistically work together. They often have systems that can send a blast message to all your exhibitors in an instant.

To give you another example, our food and beverage provider, Levy Restaurants, has their own separate network to communicate with their staff. That Friday after the Marathon bombing, when we started communicating to our staff, we brought in the Levy team as well. We asked them to duplicate our message to their staff, which they agreed to, maximizing our efforts and saving us critical time in the process.

#### 5. CONTROL YOUR MESSAGE

Emergencies are often short-lived, but in the moment, it's important to control your message to stakeholders to keep them from getting overwhelmed, and to help them focus on their jobs. During emergencies, people get starved for news, so keep a steady flow of information. Make sure you indicate when the next update is coming (in one hour, half an hour, 15 minutes) and stick to that, even if nothing has changed. This dialogue will reduce incoming calls and will allow your operations team to focus on their tasks. It's also important to focus your message on facts. Don't embellish or speculate. Talk about what's being done, and what has and hasn't changed.

### *Take an All Hazard Approach to Managing Emergencies*

We often get asked whether we as an organization had a plan when two bombs exploded at our front door in April 2013.

While the attack certainly took us by surprise, we had a plan on how to operate and communicate if an event of that magnitude was to take place, as well as how to secure and evacuate our venues in case of an emergency.

It is important to compile these types of general procedures and apply them to even the most exceptional of circumstances. The goal is to create a flexible framework that your emergency plan can adapt to in the event of an incident of any magnitude.

As an event professional, you are going to experience all kinds of crises, and even though it is impossible to plan for everything, you need to have a structure of building blocks and procedures that you can apply and adapt to any situation.

### *Disaster Decision Making*

When we talk about disaster decision making, we need to point out that there are generally two types of disasters: "the norm" or "the novel".

“The norm” are the things you expect and are already familiar with. If you host an event at the BCEC, for instance, and there are 25,000 people in the building, you’re going to potentially experience things like medical emergencies, property damage, crime, weather, etc. Some of these things happen regularly and we anticipate seeing them because of the nature of our job.

There are other things that we don’t expect to see, however, which we would describe as novel or new. Part of the decision-making process is to recognize what side of the line things fall on: whether they are norm or novel.

For example, in Boston, we don’t get overwhelmed by the weather because we’re used to it. We expect to see weather-related events (tropical storms, hurricanes, and blizzards) and we know exactly what to do in these circumstances.

Marathon Monday was a different story and anyone could instantly recognize that this event was on the other side of the line. We have a different level of appreciation for it because it is something that is outside of what we talk about or see on a regular basis.

When talking about the norm and the novel, the biggest thing and one of the toughest things to recognize is when events change. Weather effects are a great example of that. Sometimes things can start as normal, but they evolve, and if you’re not able to recognize the change and react to it, it can be very impactful to your organization or event.

### *Pre-Existing Relationships with First Responders*

Another critical component of your emergency preparedness program is your relationship with first responders. The MCCA is committed to developing these networks on the federal, state, and local level and that’s a constant theme for our organization.

The leadership of law enforcement organizations change constantly and you need to make it a point to regularly get out there and introduce yourself - it’s helpful to think about it as a political campaign. It’s extremely important that local first responders know who you are. When you’re dealing with an emergency, the one thing you don’t want to happen is to be the stranger in the room with nobody that can advocate and explain who you are and why you’re there. The best advice is to always take advantage of opportunities to meet people, go to networking events, and make a conscious effort to exchange a business card and let them know who you are.

Meeting planners who travel to different destinations and operate out of a hotel, a convention center, or a state arena need to make that part of their planning efforts. Make sure that those contacts exist.

Of course, it’s unreasonable to suggest that every time you go to a different city, you will personally introduce yourself to the director of the FBI. But, you need to make sure that if not you, then your venue partners have a solid relationship to the appropriate people (local police chief, state trooper, etc.).

## *Focus on Recovery*

Most of these emergencies are short-lived and the crisis that you're experiencing will eventually end. These types of events are impactful, but they usually don't last more than a few hours. However, even in a major crisis, you remain responsible for your event and for that reason the last piece of advice is focused on recovery.

If you're interrupted by the weather or a more impactful event, ask yourself what is next on the schedule and how you can recover from it. Who is in charge of your speakers? Who is responsible for the food & beverage? How does that interruption affect all of that?

In good emergency management practices, your plan should instantly focus on recovery and be set up in such a way that it provides you with a direct path to a point of recovery from a crisis.

Moreover, you need to be aware that not everything is a responsibility of the event organizer. There are certain things that the venue is accountable for like evacuating the building, for example. So, when you go to a specific destination, you need to make sure your venue partners have an evacuation plan, staff training, and teams in place to be able to do that successfully. Your job as an event planner is to know how to account for your team and what their responsibilities are. And, as soon as you can get back in the building, you need to determine how this crisis interrupts your schedule and how you can recover from the impact.

Focusing your efforts on what you can control is extremely important for your ability to recover from a crisis. Concentrating on the things you can't control is equal to misplacing your energy.

## Venue & Event Trends in Safety and Security

Our Public Safety Team is actively preparing for the unexpected and developing strong working relationships with first responders. The MCCA is a partner in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Large Venue Security Initiative, along with Gillette Stadium, TD Garden, and Fenway Park, as well as FBI representatives in Boston, the Massachusetts State Police, the Boston Police Department, and more. Once every quarter, the group meets to review the latest trends and security issues that the event industry is facing.

In this section, we will explore some of these trends and will discuss a few of the most effective tactics to help make your event safer.

### Venue Trends

Most event venues are inviting and collaborative spaces, featuring a lot of glass and various pick-up and drop-off locations. All these elements are now being reexamined and venues are moving towards reinforcing and hardening.

In addition, a lot more focus is being placed on traffic patterns, parking, and loading operations. On the technology side, video surveillance and analytics, access control, and alert notifications are becoming a standard practice, especially for larger events.

In terms of crowd flow, venues are starting to explore ways to build a pedestrian flow into the building that goes through a traffic path, but brings people through a level of security screening even when they don't know it's happening.

### Event Trends & Tactics

#### SAFETY & SECURITY PLANNING

In Boston, we have seen the real-life impact of attacks on mass gatherings firsthand. We know that the importance of safety and security planning has grown exponentially not only for meeting planners, but for attendees as well. And when it comes to safety and security planning, it's helpful to put your emphasis on event assessments and layered security.

#### EVENT ASSESSMENTS

At our convention centers, we put events into three categories (low, medium, and high) based on their risk level. For example, a smaller event with a low risk can score a maximum of 19 points which will put it into the "low threat" category.

On the other hand, an event with 40,000 attendees, extensive content, and public figures present might score between 40-50 points and might be assigned a "high" threat level as a result. Based on this assessment, our public safety team issues a set of recommendations tailored to the specifics of each event.

## SAMPLE EVENT ASSESSMENT

### Event Facts:

- Event type: ticketed fan convention
- Estimated attendance: 90,000 people over three days
- Open to the public
- Costumes with fake/replica weapons
- Overcrowding

### Conclusion:

Based on the above key facts, the Public Safety Department recommends the following:

- K-9 coverage
- Weapons check
- Bag checks
- Suspicious Indicator Recognition and Assessment (SIRA) Teams
- Boston Police Details Interior/Exterior
- Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC) Communication

CATEGORY	RATING
Threats	8
Facility	10
Show Type	8
Industry	10
Logistics	7
Overall Assessment	43

THREAT LEVEL	CRITERIA
High	40-50
Medium	20-39
Low	1-19

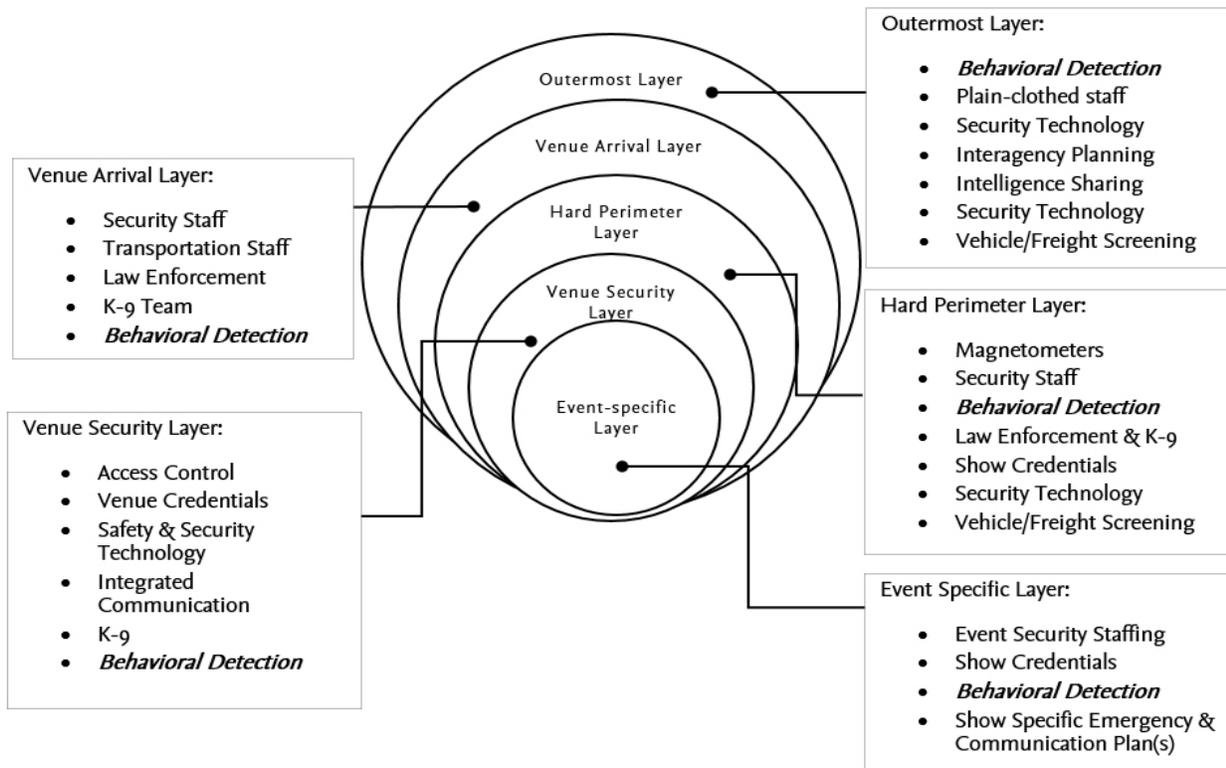
We are dedicated to approaching safety and security from a quantitative perspective, so it is important to us that our recommendations to clients are not based on thoughts and beliefs, but on actual data and numbers.

Clients are presented with a specific risk score based on a formal assessment, working with law enforcement partners, and evaluating several categories, as shown in the example above. Our public safety team also reviews the event with the previous venue and that’s how they come up with the appropriate level of security to mitigate that specific threat level.

To encourage collaboration between venues, we also recommend that event planners take some of the data that they obtained in Boston and share it with their next destination.

### Layered Security for Safer Events

Layered security utilizes different screening techniques and tactics to create layers of security, not only as attendees enter your event, but also within your event. For example, a keynote speech by a high-ranking government official or high-profile celebrity may require an additional layer of security inside of your event for admittance. Those layers of security might be clearly visible, such as metal detectors, uniformed officers, and bomb-sniffing canines, or behind the scenes, such as undercover officers and camera surveillance.



## PRE-PLANNING

The first step toward creating an effective layered security plan starts well in advance of your event and involves interagency planning and information exchange. Before every [big/high-profile] event, our Public Safety Team in Boston shares the event dates, the number of expected attendees, their preferred modes of transportation, and any other relevant event details with local first responders, as well as our transit authority, airport, and hotels. Each event is assessed for its threat level, and plans to secure the event are also shared.

## OUTERMOST LAYER

On the day of the event, the first layer that attendees encounter is the outermost layer. This area covers people who are away from the building, but coming towards the event.

Since behavioral detection plays a very important role here, at certain points closer to our venue, we have staff in plain clothes looking for anything suspicious in people's appearance, belongings, and/or actions. When looking for suspicious activity, behaviors including, but not limited to videotaping the venue, studying the crowds, or walking in an opposite direction relative to everyone else are considered red flags.

## VENUE ARRIVAL LAYER

The venue arrival layer covers the area where people get dropped off at or walk up to the venue.

Our Public Safety Team is not the only team that is trained in behavioral detection. The transportation agent that might be opening someone's cab door or letting attendees out of a shuttle is also able to determine when something doesn't look right and notify the appropriate people. In addition, it is recommended to have uniformed security staff at this layer to emphasize that the event has security in place.

## HARD PERIMETER LAYER

Once attendees enter the venue's property, they have entered the hard perimeter. This is the place to have screenings, bag searches, magnetometers, etc. Some level of law enforcement should be present at this point, as well as any additional security technology that can help support the event. In addition to focusing on behavioral detection, we also suggest checking credentials to determine whether a specific person should be admitted further into the venue.

## VENUE SECURITY LAYER

The venue security layer, covers attendees who are already inside. Here, the venue should have safety systems (a communication system, a fire alarm system, etc.) and staff in place to make sure that attendees and exhibitors are not wandering in restricted parts of the building or back corridors.

## EVENT SPECIFIC LAYER

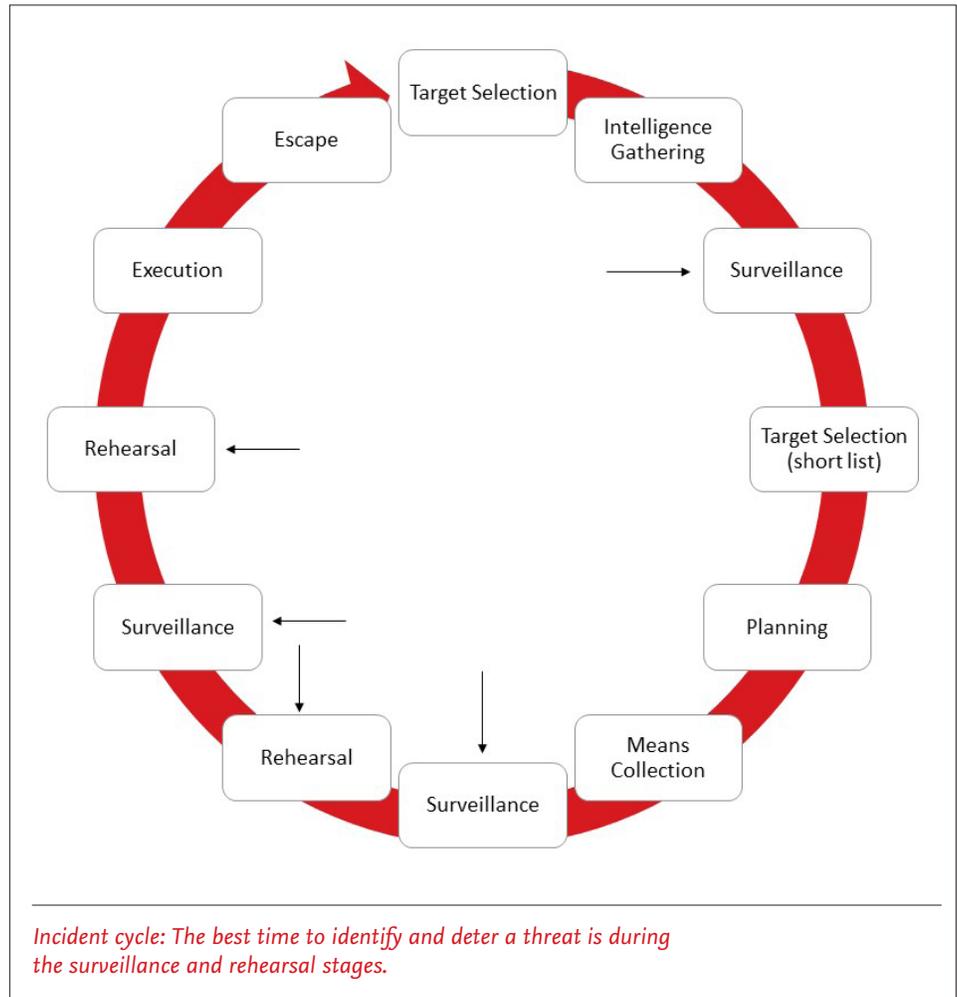
The last layer is the event space, i.e. your exhibit hall or general sessions. At that point, it is strongly advisable to have dedicated event security staff in place and ask attendees to show credentials in order to access the event.

Layered security works because of its multifaceted and sophisticated nature, and when executed right, it eliminates security gaps and vulnerabilities associated with traditional pro-active solutions.

Please, keep in mind that the list above is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all the things you need to do when applying security to an event. Rather, these are examples of different spots that may require additional attention. As an event planner, you don't necessarily have to implement all of these tactics, but it's critical that you apply the appropriate levels, depending on the nature of your event and its specific threat level.

## Safety & Security Training

As event professionals, we need to be extremely vigilant when we gather people and in many instances, our job is namely to observe and report. This is where safety and security training, like the Suspicion Indicator Recognition & Assessment (SIRA) system, comes into play. SIRA incorporates a number of highly effective threat detection and mitigation protocols, allowing both trained security and law enforcement professionals, along with venue employees, to identify high-risk individuals before an incident actually occurs.



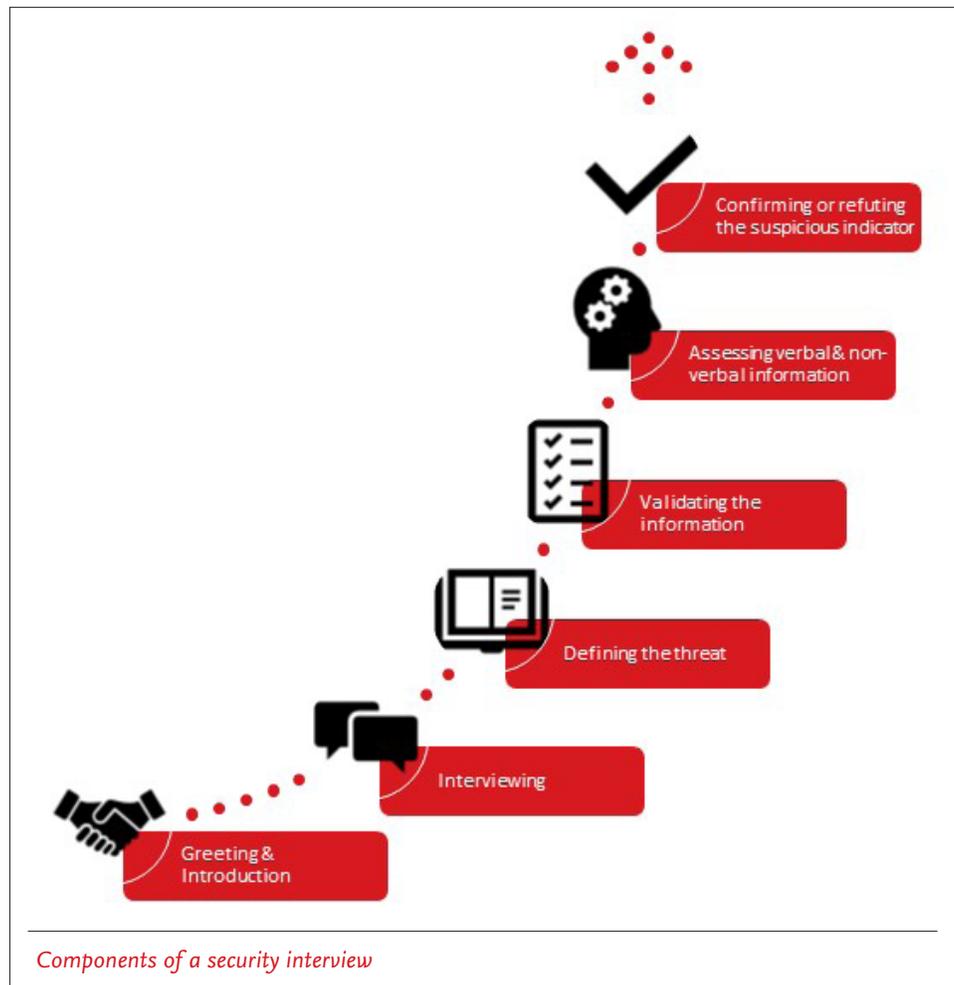
Training more members of your staff in behavioral detection extends your surveillance efforts to those directly interacting with attendees, giving you a tremendous advantage when it comes to identifying and stopping a threat. That's why, our Public Safety Team is not the only team that is trained to identify and report suspicious behavior. At the BCEC and the Hynes, all staff is required to attend a SIRA training session at least once a year.

In most cases, terrorist attacks require diligent planning and preparation and namely this pre-incident cycle is the best time to identify and

prevent a threat. This period can last anywhere from 6 months to 5 years and includes multiple stages like target selection, intelligence gathering, surveillance, and rehearsal. In addition, the majority (80%) of active shooters follow a well-developed plan and 100% of them are familiar with their target, according to FBI assessments.

Even though terrorist organizations and their methods are constantly evolving, the single attribute that all violent acts share and will continue to share is the intent to cause harm (expressed through actions, belongings, attire, and behavior). A SIRA-trained individual can establish intent by looking for a number of specific suspicious indicators some of which are listed at the end of this section.

According to SIRA's principles, suspicious doesn't mean guilty, but every suspicion should be deemed a threat until it is refuted. That's done through a security interview lasting a few minutes to a half an hour where the information provided by the suspect is validated. When looking for suspicion indicators, it's helpful to think about the contextual profile of the environment (what appearance, behavior, and belongings are different from the established typical profile and are linked to aggression) and always look for clusters of behaviors.



Here are some signs to look for:

## SUSPICIOUS ACTIONS

### BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SURVEILLANCE STAGE

- Avoidance
- Taking videos and pictures in a covert manner
- Observation of operational measures, security, and non-security personnel
- Examining structural elements like walls, places of concealment, support columns, etc.
- Asking questions about maintenance, operations, security practices, house-keeping
- Drawing diagrams of the building and taking notes
- Employees wandering in areas they don't belong
- Employees asking unusual questions about operations

### BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REHEARSAL STAGE

- Placement of vehicles
- Trying to access restricted parts of the building
- Infiltration and concealment of weapons
- Testing security protocols
- Carrying unusual belongings
- Leaving personal items unattended and observing response
- Videotaping emergency procedures

### GENERAL APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOR

- Oddness
- Sweating (forehead, under chin, upper lip – signs of stress)
- Stiff parts of the body
- Nervousness
- Trying to hide connections to other people in the building (using two different entrances)
- Don't fit the group that they're with
- Belongings don't fit the context of the environment or the attire
- Excessive number, size, or volume of luggage
- Luggage is carried in a concealed or strange manner (backpack in the front)
- Wires, switches, power sources coming out of bag
- Walking with a stiff arm (might be sign of a potential weapon)
- Body language – touching the face and body reveals stress – the higher on the body, the higher the level of stress (during security interview)

## DOCUMENTATION

- No ID
- Counterfeit ID
- Fake identity
- Suspicious travel history in passport
- No travel history on an old passport

## VEHICLES

- Front and back plates don't match
- Signs of theft
- Chemical smell (Clorox)
- Overweight
- Unusual location
- Physically blocked or black windows

## Industry Best Practices

### *The Exhibitions and Meetings Safety and Security Initiative (EMSSI)*

In 2016, the International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM), the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE), the Exhibition Services & Contractors Association (ESCA), and more than 20 other supporting organizations came together in an effort to address the increasing safety and security concerns at venues around the United States under the name [Exhibitions and Meetings Safety and Security Initiative \(EMSSI\)](#).

They are working on a comprehensive document intended to give every venue guidelines, best practices, and concrete steps on how to execute an exceptional event and to help align convention center security guidelines with federal programs and the Department of Homeland Security/Safety Act Office.

### *Massachusetts' Large Venue Security Initiative*

In Massachusetts, as part of the large venue security initiative that our organization is a part of, we're also working towards creating a set of standards for large events. We believe that everyone who works at a large venue event (Patriots game, large BCEC event, playoff game at Fenway park) must understand and be trained in behavioral and threat detection and know how to do enhanced screenings, among other things.

We've all experienced that scenario: we wait in line to get screened, finally get up there, and the security officers don't even look at our bag. There's a standard on how to do screenings and we want to bring that forward for all events that take place in Massachusetts, and ensure these standards are implemented.

### *International collaboration*

In February 2016 we hosted first responders from Paris who came over to share lessons and insights from the November 2015 attacks in Paris. The medical providers who responded to the shootings at the nightclub revealed that they used a lot of the techniques that we used in Boston in response to the Marathon attacks (how to apply a tourniquet; how to make a makeshift tourniquet; what to look for in a patient). They pointed out that they wouldn't have been able to save as many lives as they did if it wasn't for what Boston's first responders shared with them after the Marathon bombing.

All medical data from our first responder community was distributed to many people overseas including our colleagues in Paris. It was incredibly inspiring for us to hear that they could learn from our experience and save more people thanks to what we shared.



No matter how rapid the arrival of professional emergency responders, bystanders will always be first on the scene. A person who is bleeding can die from blood loss within five minutes, so it's important to quickly stop the blood loss.

Remember to be aware of your surroundings and move yourself and the injured person to safety, if necessary.

**Call 911.**

Bystanders can take simple steps to keep the injured alive until appropriate medical care is available. Here are three actions that you can take to help save a life:

**1. Apply Pressure with Hands**  
 EXPOSE to find where the bleeding is coming from and apply **FIRM, STEADY PRESSURE** to the bleeding site with both hands if possible.



**2. Apply Dressing and Press**  
 EXPOSE to find where the bleeding is coming from and apply **FIRM, STEADY PRESSURE** to the bleeding site with bandages or clothing.



**3. Apply Tourniquet(s)**  
 If the bleeding doesn't stop, place a tourniquet 2-3 inches closer to the torso from the bleeding. The tourniquet may be applied and secured over clothing.



If the bleeding still doesn't stop, place a second tourniquet closer to the torso from first tourniquet.

**PULL** the strap through the buckle, **TWIST** the rod tightly, **CLIP** and **SECURE** the rod with the clasp or the Velcro strap.

The 'Stop the Bleed' campaign was initiated by a federal interagency workgroup convened by the National Security Council Staff, The White House. The purpose of the campaign is to build national resilience by better preparing the public to save lives by raising awareness of basic actions to stop life threatening bleeding following everyday emergencies and man-made and natural disasters. Advances made by military medicine and research in hemorrhage control during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have informed the work of this initiative which exemplifies translation of knowledge back to the homeland to the benefit of the general public. The Department of the Defense owns the 'Stop the Bleed' logo and phrase - trademark pending.



Homeland Security

Office of Health Affairs

## Stop the Bleed

In October 2015, the White House launched "Stop the Bleed", a national awareness campaign designed to encourage bystanders to become trained, equipped, and empowered to help in a bleeding emergency.

If we look at what took place in Las Vegas in 2017 and other mass casualty events, by the time law enforcement or first responders get to scene, it might already be too late, and for that reason it's important to educate and empower ordinary citizens.

The MCCA is training its entire staff and making equipment available throughout our venues. We provide space where large crowds of people gather and it is incredibly important to us to be able to help in case anything happens in any of our buildings or adjacent to us in our neighborhood. The more of us that can do that, the more effective our first responders are going to be.



## *See Something, Say Something*

Every organization seems to be embracing the “See Something, Say Something” message. But if you aim to build an organization around that idea, you need to be prepared to hear something. Don’t tell people to report suspicious activity, if you’re not in a position to do something about it.

So, if a staff member raises their hand and says, “Something doesn’t look right”, take it seriously. Even if you think it might be nothing, take it seriously. If you’re building an organization based on these principles, you must be prepared to hear about it and respond appropriately.

## Industry Outlook

The events industry is an estimated \$283 billion a year industry that employs over 2.3 million people and generates \$44.9 billion in taxes. To sustain the industry growth and ensure the safety of our staff, attendees, and stakeholders, we need to make sure there is constant information flow and sharing of best practices.

The environment that we live in is constantly evolving and we need to be aware that things can change for any event at any point. Based on what happens overseas and in the U.S., an event that didn't normally need to apply screenings in the past, may be required to implement that measure because there's risk associated with the event. Or, it might be because the attendees won't show up unless the security is ramped up.

Since 2009, we have been hosting a leadership conference that brings about 11,000 attendees to the BCEC. Besides having 11,000 people in the building, this event has no direct history of security threats. But, that client chooses to have metal detectors and K-9s present, and generally aims to demonstrate that security is a priority, in order to make people comfortable. This is where things may collide in our industry. Some of these measures may be put in place out of necessity, but sometimes people are just fearful to come to events if there's not enough security in place, so it needs to be emphasized.

In Boston, we believe that in order to make the convention industry safer and more secure we all need to engage in information sharing and collaboration with clients, partners, and even competitors. As demonstrated in the examples cited in this paper, safety and security data should not be perceived as a competitive advantage and kept secret, as it can ultimately help secure the industry and save lives.

In today's complex and ever-changing societal and political landscape, when organizations cooperate and bring different strengths and knowledge to the table, we can truly achieve synergy and sustainable growth.

## Safety & Security at Our Venues in Boston

Our Public Safety Team supports your most ambitious plans by maintaining a safe and secure environment in our facilities and delivering excellent customer service to your clients, exhibitors, and guests. Our staff is courteous, professional, and expertly trained. We know the city as well as we know our facilities, so we can handle any situation quickly and effectively – giving you the peace of mind you need as you craft unique experiences for your audience.

### Services

- Control Center - Staffed 24/7, our state-of-the-art command and coordination centers serve as a link between event staff and all MCCA departments. We provide facilities monitoring, digital CCTV service, access control systems, as well as direct access to first responders.
- Emergency Preparedness - our risk assessment service is designed to give you peace of mind as you plan your event.
- Customized Access Security - working with your event manager, our Public Safety team secures meeting rooms, providing customized locks and strict key control.
- Fire Safety Planning - Our Public Safety team works with your event manager to review and approve your floor plans and room layouts for fire safety.
- First Responder Coordination - Our strong relationship with city, state, and federal authorities ensures fast and appropriate responses to any incidents at our facilities.

To learn more about our Public Safety services, go to [our website](#) or call us at 877-393-3393.

## Appendix A:

# 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing Media Coverage

[Terror at the Marathon](#), The Boston Globe

[Boston Marathon bomb blasts kill at least three, leave scores injured](#), The Washington Post (April 15, 2013)

[Blasts at Boston Marathon Kill 3 and Injure 100](#), The New York Times (April 15, 2013)

[Nation reacts to Boston Marathon bombing](#), USA Today (April 15, 2013)

[Boston Marathon bombs: as it happened](#), The Telegraph (April 17, 2013)

[Mourning, resolve and quest for answers after deadly Boston Marathon bombs](#), CNN (April 17, 2013)

[Timeline: How the Boston Marathon bombing suspects were hunted down](#), CNN (April 20, 2013)

[BOSTON MASSACRE: The Full Story Of How Two Deranged Young Men Terrorized An American City](#), Business Insider (April 29, 2013)

[Timeline: The Boston Marathon bombing, manhunt and investigation](#), CNN (May 2, 2013)

[Boston Marathon bombers originally plotted Fourth of July attack, sources say](#), FOX News (May 3, 2013)

## Appendix B:

# 2015 Pokémon World Championship Media Coverage

[Police Stop Gunmen at Pokemon World Championship](#), TIME (August 23, 2015)

[Men arrested on gun charges during Pokemon championships](#), USA Today (August 23, 2015)

[Police feared a mass shooting in alleged Pokémon plot](#), The Boston Globe (August 24, 2015)

[Pokemon players arrested after bringing real arsenal to tournament](#), The Washington Post (August 24, 2015)

[Pokemon plot foiled by police](#), Boston Herald (August 24, 2015)

[2 Men Held Without Bail For Alleged Threats To Pokemon World Championships In Boston](#), WBUR News (August 24, 2015)

[Potential Massacre at Pokémon Tournament Averted by Boston Police](#), People Magazine (August 24, 2015)

[Pokemon World Championships pair arrested](#), BBC News (August 24, 2015)

[Police: Two arrested after threatening Pokemon event \(video\)](#), CNN

[The geeks from hell: Video-gamers planned to shoot up the Pokemon Word Championship with an AR-15 and a shotgun to make themselves famous](#), The Daily Mail (July 21, 2016)

[Pokémon community is bewildered by alleged plot](#), The Boston Globe (August 25, 2016)

## Appendix C: *TSNN Crisis Management Series*

[5 Steps to Develop an Effective Crisis Communication Plan for Your Event](#), Signature Boston Blog  
(first appeared on TSNN.com/TSNN Association Show News email on January 15, 2018)

[Venue & Event Trends in Safety and Security You Need to Know About](#), Signature Boston Blog  
(first appeared on TSNN.com/TSNN Association Show News email on March 3, 2018)

[Make Your Events Safer with Layered Security](#), Signature Boston Blog  
(first appeared on TSNN.com/TSNN Association Show News email on April 29, 2018)

[Make Your Employees an Extension of Your Security Team with Behavioral Detection](#), Signature Boston Blog  
(first appeared on TSNN.com/TSNN Association Show News email on May 14, 2018)

*Our Signature Boston team is committed to providing you with service excellence across all of our venues. From our first meeting, we will begin a partnership that ensures flawless execution for overall event success.*

*Learn more about Boston and our award-winning convention centers at [SignatureBoston.com](http://SignatureBoston.com). To arrange a site visit, call us at 877-393-3393 or email [sales@SignatureBoston.com](mailto:sales@SignatureBoston.com).*



The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority owns and operates the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center, and The Lawn On D.

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