



National Retail Federation[®]
The Voice of Retail Worldwide

2010



Effective Crowd Management

**Guidelines on how to maintain the safety and security
of your customers, employees and store**

www.nrf.com/crowdmanagement



About the Guidelines

In response to increasing special events and promotional sales at retail stores and shopping centers, NRF consulted with retail, mall security and law enforcement officials to release Effective Crowd Management Guidelines in 2009. Trends indicate these events will continue in the future, so the guidelines have been updated with new events and information for 2010. www.nrf.com/crowdmanagement

About the National Retail Federation

As the world's largest retail trade association and the voice of retail worldwide, the National Retail Federation's global membership includes retailers of all sizes, formats and channels of distribution as well as chain restaurants and industry partners from the U.S. and more than 45 countries abroad. In the U.S., NRF represents the breadth and diversity of an industry with more than 1.6 million American companies that employ nearly 25 million workers and generated 2009 sales of \$2.3 trillion. www.nrf.com

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Section 1: Introduction

While the 2010 holiday shopping season will not be the biggest ever, retailers are expected to see sales grow over last year. According to a recent survey released by the National Retail Federation, holiday shoppers are expected to flood malls, shopping centers and retail stores en masse looking for bargains. Along with this energy and excitement, loss prevention and security associates are preparing for the oncoming crowds.

Retailers typically save the best sales and promotions for Black Friday, many companies chose to offer holiday promotions early this year in hopes of attracting more shopping dollars. While retailers can plan for some crowds, others cannot be anticipated. Regardless, loss prevention and security professionals must be prepared to react and respond to incidents quickly and effectively to help manage the brand, sales and image of the store.

Tales of unexpectedly large crowds have been easy to come by in recent months. Just recently in Washington, the Jon Stewart Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear was initially expected to attract tens of thousands. In actuality, the rally attracted hundreds of thousands. Massive crowds took over the streets, the public transportation system was overwhelmed, and retailers within a half-mile radius of the National Mall had lines weaving throughout their stores. While the rally was a planned event, no one accurately estimated the large crowds that descended onto downtown Washington. Retailers and law enforcement responded accordingly, and customers were serviced as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Two other events within the past twelve months that have taken retail loss prevention and mall security by surprise include:

- **June 2010 iPhone4 Release** – Since the original iPhone was released in 2007, Apple product launches have become synonymous with boisterous fans and loyalists waiting in long lines at stores around the world to be their first to get their hands on the company's new product. This year's iPhone4 release was no different, in fact, pre-orders were so popular (600,000 units sold in one week), Apple stopped the sale fearing product would run out. When the long awaited release day came, thousands of Apple customers waited for hours to get their new phone. While most stores kept lines orderly and were well prepared, the amount of people who showed up for their new phone was surprising to most, especially for those in line. This is a great example of how working closely with mall and shopping center security as well as neighboring stores makes Apple well prepared once customers arrive.

- **November 2009 Justin Bieber Celebrity Appearance** – Late last year, a Justin Bieber signing event was cancelled. Scheduled to appear at Roosevelt Field Mall on Long Island, NY, about 3,000 fans were lined up outside the Justice clothing store on the second tier of the mall. Many more attempted to gain entry to the shopping center and when the crowd quickly became unruly and unmanageable, extra police were dispatched. Police tried to minimize access to the mall, but eventually had to cancel the event. One was arrested and a few suffered minor injuries.

While planned events give retailers plenty of time to plan and train for a flawless event, retailers must consistently work to prepare for the unexpected events that inevitably occur. Teams with a plan already in place are in the best position to minimize any potential issues and make the shopping experience a positive one for consumers when the unexpected arises.

The purpose of this white paper is to provide guidelines and considerations for both retailers and mall management officials when planning special events, including Black Friday, product launches, celebrity appearances and promotional sales.

Section 2: Promotional/Holiday Sales, Special Events

The challenging economy has forced both retailers and shoppers to be very resourceful. As Americans continue to seek great deals, retailers are increasingly using special events and promotions to drive traffic to their stores. Increased frequency of these events, special markdowns, historically low discounts and increased celebrity endorsements are attracting larger crowds to malls and stores. Some of these events include:

Promotional/Holiday Sales

Black Friday Sales
Limited quantity sale items
Early bird specials
One-day sales
Incredibly low prices

Special Events

Giveaways
Celebrity Appearances
Game/video releases
Book releases

Retailers are not the only ones hosting special sales and events. Mall management and property development companies are also courting shoppers by hosting events in their locations. While these events drive traffic that may benefit retailers, they require additional preparation and communication. Pre-planning requires multiple resources and cooperation among several departments including loss prevention, operations, merchandising and marketing.

The amount of additional resources and pre-planning is subjective, as special events can attract as few as 10 people to as many as tens of thousands. Thus, some events can be planned a few days in advance while others may require months of planning.

Retailers agree that the top priority in event planning is safety – the safety of customers, associates, service providers and security personnel. Proactively planning and preparing for special events, with some even staging dress rehearsals, ensures the success of an event. While retailers may have more control over events that occur or are hosted by their stores, external events may also require proper planning and reaction. These events can include:

- Protests and civil disturbances
- Parades and rallies
- Sporting events
- Political events or conventions (e.g. World Bank/International Monetary Fund Meetings, Democratic/Republican National Conventions, etc.)
- University homecomings, games or special events that significantly increase traffic to shopping centers
- Citywide meetings/conference

Section 3: Sales and Events vs. Emergency Management Crowd Controls

Planning for special events, promotional sales and Black Friday traffic is very different than planning and preparing for emergency management crowd control: the former is very proactive while the latter is more reactive. Special events and sales offer advanced notice and retailers have enough notice to schedule extra staff and security, use signage, line stanchions, tickets/wristbands and implement other advance planning protocols. The ability to prepare enables retailers to arrive at 'game time' with an articulated plan, communication to customers, associates, management, security and, if the event warrants, law enforcement and mall management.

But even the best-laid plans run into challenges. Contingency plans should be created for the "what if" situations that may arise, including larger-than-anticipated crowds, inclement weather, power outages, large lines of angry customers, trampling, shooting, merchandise sell-outs, etc. This can also include alternative entry/exit points for customers, celebrity guests, associates and security/law enforcement.

To prepare for the unexpected, retailers should consider:

- evacuation routes
- communication plans
- law enforcement/public official engagement
- reunification
- preservation of evidence

Section 4: Mall-based Retailers vs. Non Mall-based Retailers

Each retailer has its own set of policies and procedures for dealing with crowds, though mall-based retailers and non mall-based retailers have different considerations.

Mall-based Retailers

Mall-based retailers include specialty stores and anchor/department stores in a mall and do not generally have domain/control over the common areas outside of their stores or in the parking lot. For special events and sales that attract large crowds outside of the store/mall, retailers need to partner with mall management through each step of the event.

When events will cause long lines to form in the parking lot or in the mall's common area, retailers and mall management have the following items to consider:

- **Mall management approval of the event**
 - Additional costs for enhanced security presence may be assessed

- **Logistics of the line**
 - line placement
 - line monitors
 - tickets/wristbands
 - signage
 - stanchions
 - inclement weather plan

- **Security**
 - mall security
 - store employees
 - utilizing third party security companies
 - security in the parking lot and mall common areas
 - in-house versus third party line monitors
 - law enforcement/event protection professionals

Stand Alone Retailers and Strip Center Locations

Stand alone retail locations and strip center stores encounter issues different than mall operators. In most cases, the retailer is responsible for all aspects of the event which may include line formation, crowd control, administering tickets/wristbands and working with extra security guards and law enforcement. Some retailers may even add entertainment to make the waiting experience less anxious and more pleasurable. For stores that do not have dedicated security or loss prevention staff, the on-site store team is often tasked with coordinating, planning, staffing and executing the event.

On the plus side, this approach offers a knowledgeable sales staff and personnel who know the clientele very well. However, this also poses challenges, especially if the event doesn't run seamlessly. Providing clear lines of communication, a corporate contact with key decision making capabilities as well as ensuring that the store manager has key contacts with local law enforcement and the mall/property management company is imperative.

Section 5: Crowd Management Guidelines Reference

Retailers, mall management and law enforcement can apply some basic components when preparing for an event to effectively utilize the resources at hand.

- Safety
- Communication
- Event Logistics
- Contingency Plan

Safety: Safety is a primary concern for retailers, especially when hosting in-store events. Plans should be made for the best interests of all people on-site during the event including:

- Customers
- Store Associates
- Service Providers
- Mall Management
- Law Enforcement

Extra security precautions retailers may consider include:

- Contacting local fire and law enforcement agencies to determine if the event site meets all public safety requirements.
- Ensuring all permits and licenses are obtained and that local emergency services, including the local authorities, are aware of the event (for events requiring special permits).
- Preparing an emergency plan that addresses potential dangers employees may face, including overcrowding, aggressive shoppers, violent acts, being struck/crushed by the crowd, fire and unexpected natural disasters. Retailers should consider sharing these emergency plans with local public safety agencies.
- Having key staff trained on how to perform Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and on how to use an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) device.
- Instruct employees to exercise good common sense and follow instructions from authorized public officials or emergency first responders, keeping in mind the company policies.

Communication: While every event is different, a comprehensive plan should allow for contacts with all affected internal and/or external individuals, including customers.

- **Prior to the Event** – Advance communication is required for most events based on the scope and anticipated number of attendees. Large events, such as Black Friday, special promotions or celebrity appearances, may require planning two to three months in advance. Key contacts may include:
 - **Appropriate internal departments**
 - ◆ Facilities
 - ◆ Human Resources
 - ◆ Loss Prevention
 - ◆ Marketing/Advertising
 - ◆ Public Relations
 - ◆ Operations
 - ◆ Security
 - **Appropriate external contacts**
 - ◆ Customers
 - ◆ Law Enforcement
 - ◆ Mall Management
 - ◆ Media
 - ◆ Neighboring Stores
 - ◆ Private Security Consultants
- **Day of the Event** – On the day of the event, clear and effective communication to the operational team (cashiers, sales associates, loss prevention, security, service providers, store management) and to customers is critical. By keeping customers informed of the status of the event and the traffic flow, expectations on wait time or product availability can be managed appropriately.

Measures to clearly communicate on the day of the event include:

- **Signage** – Provide legible and visible signs that describe entrance locations, store opening times, and other important information such as the location of major sale items and restroom facilities.
- **Stanchions / Barriers** – Create barricaded lines with adequate numbers of breaks and turns at regular intervals to maintain orderly flow and reduce the risk of harm to customers and associates. These lines may either be outside or inside the store to manage traffic flow.
- **Public Announcements** – Some retailers use the public announcement system to update customers on the status of store opening, location of promotional items, the start time of special events, evacuations, communicate with employees and other important information.

- **Tickets / Wristbands** – Tickets and wristbands can be used to maintain orderly lines and manage expectations of customers. Generally these are provided by retailers hosting specials for the first customers in line or limited items. Additionally, retailers could consider using an internet lottery for high-demand items.
- **Designated Chain of Command** – Identify a key event manager who will serve as the ultimate decision maker ensuring that all urgent issues and situations are addressed. Additionally, clearly outline roles of associates from general manager to security personnel to cashiers.
- **Site Map** – Create a site map noting entrances, exits, traffic flow, line flow and back up plans for larger-than-expected crowds along with where appropriate store staff will be located.

Event Logistics: From the last person in line to the center stage or the place where the hottest promotional items are located, the logistics of the event should be fully thought through and accounted for. Event logistics to take into consideration:

Customers in Line

- **Entry/Exit Points** – By limiting the accessibility of stores or other facilities to designated entry and exit points, traffic flow and crowd levels can be managed effectively. Additionally, propping open doors can decrease safety hazards that may arise with an influx of excited shoppers. Retailers should consider starting the line with some open space so that customers do not line up right at the entrance to the store. This will allow for orderly admittance into the shopping center/retail store and make it possible to divide the crowd into smaller groups, if necessary. Provide an alternate entrance for people with disabilities. Do not restrict egress, and do not block or lock exit doors.
- **Traffic Flow** – Use environmental barriers and store layout to place promotional items/entertainment areas in key spots to manage congestion. Additionally, clear signage can help crowds easily find their way through stores. If possible, use more than one entrance to alleviate overwhelming flow. Position security or crowd managers to the sides of entering (or exiting) public, not in the center of their path. When the store reaches maximum occupancy, do not allow additional customers to enter until the occupancy level drops.

Associates

Extra, knowledgeable staff onsite will help ensure a successful event. Consider:

- Extra cashiers. Designate a head cashier/store manager solely stationed at the cash wrap to float and resolve problems
- Existing security and extra security including off-duty law enforcement or third-party security
- Make sure all employees and crowd control personnel are aware that the doors are about to open
- Utilize separate entrances for staff and appropriate door monitors in these areas

Merchandise Placement

- During a promotional sale, strategically placing the sale items will help spread out the large crowd and manage flow better
- Retailers should also account for merchandise replenishment

Contingency Plans: As mentioned in Section 3, the best-laid plans may run into challenges. Contingency plans should be created for the “what if” situations to mitigate additional safety and security concerns.

Section 6: Conclusion

The challenging economy has changed the face of the retail community and required retailers to be more creative to attract consumers' shopping dollars. Interactive and engaging customer experiences, special events and celebrity appearances are only continuing to gain in popularity as brands aim to become a part of an individual's lifestyle rather than merely a place to purchase everything on their checklist.

Retailers and mall management continue to expand their experience planning and executing promotional sales and special events. However, each situation brings a different set of circumstances. Measures to mitigate risks that may occur with large crowds during the upcoming holiday season and future special events have been taken, but unexpected events do occur.

Appendix A: Promotional Sales and Special Events

Checklist

Each promotional sale and special event will be unique, however some of the same components to preparing and planning for the event can be included in the promotional sale/special event plan. It's crucial to remember that every plan should be flexible and change with circumstances. Below is a checklist of items to consider incorporating into your plan.

Event Assessment

- ▶ **Event Type** (celebrity appearance, in-store entertainment, promotional sale, etc.)
- ▶ **Scope of Event** (number of expected guests and duration of the event)
- ▶ **Time Frame** (amount of advanced notice)

Planning

▶ **Staffing**

- √ Ensure that stores will have adequate staffing levels throughout the event. Staffing should take into consideration all critical positions (cashiers, loss prevention, security, re-stocking, sales associates, management)
- √ Make arrangements for extra staffing and additional security personnel in locations where a history of prior incidents warrants increased attention.
- √ For events that will draw large crowds, contact law enforcement to notify them of the upcoming event.
- √ Utilize separate entrances for staff and appropriate door monitors in these areas.

▶ **Training**

- √ Associates working the day of the event and back-up associates should all be trained and knowledgeable of both the event and promotional items including merchandise placement, event location and timing of special/hourly promotions.
- √ Brief associates on what to communicate to unhappy customers and which managers and other store personnel should be notified to de-escalate certain situations.
- √ For large-scale events, consider hosting a dress rehearsal in advance.
- √ Associates should be trained on who to contact in the event of any situations and who the key decision maker is on the day of the event. Additionally, associates should be informed of procedures (if any)/ or protocols for dialing 911.
- √ Review evacuation procedures.

► **Communication**

- √ Provide a clear communication plan which covers how critical information will be delivered on the day of the event to customers, celebrity guests, entertainers, associates, security personnel, service providers, mall management and law enforcement.
- √ Contact local fire and law enforcement agencies to determine if the event site meets all public safety requirements.
- √ When required by local authorities and to maximize safety, ensure that all permits and licenses are obtained and that local emergency services, including the local authorities, are aware of the event.
- √ Devise a clear communication plan on how potential issues should be communicated to the key decision maker.
- √ Designate a point of contact who will liaise with law enforcement prior to the event (if necessary) and during the event (if an emergency situation arises).
- √ Consider renting or purchasing two-way radios and utilizing them the day of the event to communicate with key managers, security personnel, floor monitors, etc. Cellular phones are not effective for mass communication.
- √ Utilize signage or pamphlets to communicate entrance locations, store opening times, traffic flow, merchandise placement and event location.
- √ Use public announcement (PA) system, if available, to communicate pertinent information to customers inside the store. If the PA system broadcasts outside the store, it could be used to communicate to customers waiting in line either prior to or during the sale/event. These announcements can also include seasonally appropriate music, information on specials and where they are located within the store.

► **Physical/Environmental Considerations**

- √ Store Layout – Utilize the physical/environmental layout of the store to your advantage during the event. Entry and Exit Points should be determined based on how the crowd will be able to file into the store as well as the best place outside of the store where it makes the most sense for the line to form.
- √ Merchandise Layout – Promotional sale items should be placed throughout the store to dissipate crowds and help alleviate potential congestion.
- √ Entertainment Location – Similar to merchandise layout, the location of the special event/celebrity guest/entertainment should complement the layout of the store as well as any merchandise that may be promoted alongside the event. Security for both the celebrity/entertainer and customers should be taken into consideration for staging and execution of the event.

► Line Formation Considerations

- √ Pre-determine the location and flow of the line, with a back-up plan to manage the unexpected (larger crowds, extreme weather conditions, etc.).
- √ Consider staffing the line either with security, store associates or entertainers.
- √ Stage the line entrance away from the store entrance so that customers are not directly in front of the store entrance.
- √ Line monitors can assist in keeping customers updated with the status of events, availability of merchandise and other factors that may affect their decision to stand in line. Additionally, having line monitors builds rapport with customers as unpleasant news will be better received from a person who has been standing outside with them for a majority of their wait time as opposed to an unfamiliar face.
- √ Lighting up the parking lot to accommodate customers arriving at early hours or making additional accommodations, such as renting portable bathrooms, may also alleviate frustrations or anxiety of customers waiting in long lines.
- √ Position security or crowd monitors to the sides of entering (or exiting) public, not in the center of their path.
- √ Provide an alternate entrance for people with disabilities.

► Event Logistics

- √ Pre-Opening
 - Establish early arrival times for associates.
 - Establish the timing and the personnel who will set out signage, line stanchions/barriers, hand out wristbands, or act as line monitors communicating with early arriving customers.
 - Provide legible and visible signs that describe entrance locations, store opening times, and other important information such as the location of major sale items. Line stanchions/barriers should be set up prior to customers arriving.
 - Stanchions/barriers should be set up in a snake formation for crowd management purposes and have enough breaks and turns at regular intervals to maintain an orderly flow.
 - Use more than one entrance to alleviate overwhelming crowds, if possible.
 - When the store reaches maximum occupancy, do not allow additional customers to enter until the occupancy level drops.

- √ Store Opening
 - Determine what doors will open and who, if anyone, will monitor the doors. Make sure all employees and crowd control personnel are aware that the doors are about to open.
 - Consider propping open doors while the traffic flow entering the store is heavy; this will help avoid potential safety issues.
 - Create a site map, which includes traffic flow, clearly marks promotional items/special event location, location of critical staff members and law enforcement liaison.
 - Have managers and key decision maker in key locations throughout the store when the store initially opens/event commences and at key times throughout the sale/event.

► **Emergency Situations**

- √ Instruct employees to call 911 and follow internal procedures once they have called for assistance.
- √ Have Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) device(s) readily available and key staff trained on how to use the device as well as how to perform Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).
- √ Address potential dangers employees may face including: overcrowding, aggressive shoppers, violent acts, being struck/crushed by the crowd, fire and unexpected natural/man-made disasters.
- √ Consider sharing these emergency plans with local public safety agencies.



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