

# Public Safety Planning for Political Events

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Political events in a given jurisdiction (e.g., candidate visits, debates, rallies, etc.) place specific demands on law enforcement agencies. Especially during election season, law enforcement leaders should anticipate which political events will occur within their agency's jurisdiction and neighboring jurisdictions to plan accordingly. Some of these political events, like the partisan conventions, may already have an extensive pre-planning period and considerable resources dedicated to them. Others, like a candidate visit, may get scheduled with little warning and generate significant resource gaps. In either case, agencies must quickly adapt to support these events and ensure the political process remains safe and secure.

**Below are recommendations for how law enforcement agencies can better prepare their agency to manage political events that take place in their jurisdictions, organized according to when they would take place relative to the event itself: (1) Pre-event planning, (2) Event management, and (3) Post-event after action review.**

## PRE-EVENT PLANNING

- **Connect with event coordinators early.** Proactively communicate with event staff to identify their security needs. Ahead of the event, it is a good idea to:
  - Identify a point of contact who will represent the event coordinators.
  - Ascertain if high-profile individuals will be at the event, as such individuals could drive further attendance, require additional security services from your agency, or may be traveling with their own security detail with whom you would need to coordinate.
  - Develop and estimate the anticipated number of participants/attendees.
  - Determine whether the event will require closing streets venues, streets or other locations that may impact the community.
  - Learn whether there is funding available for the additional law enforcement and government resources required for the event.
- **Coordinate with local leaders and other law enforcement agency leaders as applicable.**
  - Ahead of time, notify the Mayor, County Board Members, City Manager, Town Manager, County CEO or their equivalent of the event.
  - Connect with other department leaders who may have a role to play in ensuring a political event remains safe. These may include: Emergency Management, Public Works, Transportation, and Community Services, among others.
  - Coordinate external communications plans across governmental partners, departments, agencies, to ensure all messaging put out to the public is consistent and timely.
  - Identify primary points of contact to coordinate with inside any other law enforcement agency or department that will likely be a necessary collaborator.
- **Solicit further information from the planners of the political event.** The following are some of the questions to ask of the event planners as the event plans are further underway:
  - Will another law enforcement agency or protective detail be working on the security planning? *If so, identify a primary point of contact.*
  - What role do the event planners see local law enforcement playing?
  - Are event coordinators aware of any known threats or external public safety concerns?
  - Do event planners anticipate any related demonstrations or rallies to take place, either on site or in the event's vicinity?

- **Prepare for increased demonstration activity and set expectations about how the agency will manage such activity.**
  - Decide which content-neutral time, place, and manner restrictions will be enforced as to demonstrations, such as whether there will be free speech zones. Communicate with event planners and the public about which restrictions will be enforced and how.
  - Reach out to groups that might be organizing demonstrations or other gatherings to understand their plans and anticipate any potential counter-protests. Provide these groups with a point of contact inside your agency to stay in touch as the situation develops.
- **Assess the event space.** Ahead of the event your agency should learn:
  - Does the location provide adequate space, security, control and emergency egress?
  - Have similar events been held at this location? If yes, what security challenges did those events face? Is there a location history for the venue that you could obtain?
  - What does transportation to/from the event space look like for attendees? If there is parking available on site, are there ways to secure the parking lot?
  - Have alternative locations been considered?
  - Are there ways to reduce the event's footprint?
  - Are there public safety considerations that may have been missed by event coordinators?
- **Conduct pre-event security and threat assessments.**
  - Coordinate with local fusion centers, intelligence agencies and real-time crime centers for tracking threats and hazards.
  - Confirm the agency's intelligence flows, including methods for both gathering and sharing information.
  - Identify who will coordinate information sharing for each agency involved in the event.
  - Conduct a threat assessment for the event and then continue monitoring for changes to the threat posture and updated intelligence.
- **Coordinate with all relevant law enforcement and agencies that will play a role in the event.**
  - Update all relevant mutual aid agreements.
  - Anticipate the need for additional resources and plan accordingly.
  - Provide clear expectations to supporting agencies and request the required resources early.
- **Establish command and control protocols for the event's duration.**
  - Develop an operational plan with input from all relevant stakeholders.
  - Consider an Integrated Command System (ICS) model for a unified joint command.
  - Identify the Incident Commander (IC), Deputy IC and key decision makers for the event.
  - Depending on the event's size, an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) may be required.
    - Make allowances for staffing and resourcing the EOC.
  - Identify primary methods for both voice and digital communications.
  - Identify the need/use of technology such as drones, license plate readers, cameras, etc.
- **Consider additional staff training and review relevant policies and procedures.**
  - Brief everyone involved on the operational plans.
  - Review relevant emergency procedure policies and mutual aid procedures.
  - Remind agency staff and personnel that remaining apolitical is mission critical, even/ especially when protecting public safety during political events.

## EVENT MANAGEMENT

- **Inspect the event site.**
  - Check for environmental changes since the operational plan was completed.
  - Ensure the necessary equipment is in place (e.g., barriers, traffic control devices, etc.).
  - Secure the environment to external access.

- **Conduct a pre-event briefing for all personnel.**
  - Review communication policies and command & control procedures.
  - Review personnel assignments and responsibilities.
  - Set expectations and discuss the role of LE at the event, including values. Review emergency procedures.
- **The operational plan is just the start; be prepared to pivot.**
  - Be flexible—any plan will likely change or need to be modified.
  - Ensure there is an efficient method for approving changes through the IC or EOC.
  - Communicate all changes to relevant personnel.
- **Stay ready for a Critical Incident Response.**
  - Maintain situational awareness.
  - Provide command & control procedures to personnel.
  - Remain flexible to reallocate resources as necessary.
  - When in doubt, defer to the emergency procedures and personnel put in place ahead of time.

## POST-EVENT AFTER ACTION REVIEW

- **Assess the event overall.**
  - What went well? What could be improved? What additional resources were needed?
  - Evaluate command & control and communications plans.
  - Assess personnel performance.
- **Solicit feedback from and provide feedback to event coordinators.**
  - A multidirectional feedback loop is helpful here.
  - Ensure that such feedback emphasizes considerations for future events and security planning.
- **Take note of community concerns.**
  - What impact did the event security arrangements have on the community, both positive and negative?
- **Post-incident after-action report.**
  - Publish an after-action report and share it with key stakeholders.
  - Any critical tactical /operational information should be shared only on a need-to-know basis.
- **Follow-up on outstanding matters.**
  - Collect and aggregate all reports and data from the event.
  - Complete any required investigations.
  - Coordinate with the District Attorney's or Attorney General's offices on any cases or further investigations stemming from the event.