Crown Control Safety Checklist



Customer stampedes in retail settings are a real hazard, especially at this time of year. Exhibit A: The 2008 Black Friday tragedy at a Walmart in Valley Stream, New York, in which a temporary worker was trampled to death by shoppers rushing into the store. Crowds are also apt to become dangerously unruly during Boxing Day promotions, product launches, holiday shopping, major clearance events and other occasions when large numbers of customers converge on a store or entrance at the same time. Here's a Checklist of action steps to take to protect your own workers and customers from crowd stampedes.

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Crowd Control & Customer Stampede Prevention Checklist

Purpose: Use this Checklist to ensure that customer volumes, entrance and exit arrangements, promotional activities and employee responsibilities are controlled before crowd conditions become dangerous.

1. **Pre-Event Crowd Risk Assessment**

Instructions: *Complete before any promotion, event or operating period expected to attract unusually large crowds.*

[ ] Identify crowd-generating activities, including major

sales, limited-quantity merchandise, door-crasher promotions, product launches, giveaways, holiday events, and other activities likely to produce unusually high customer volumes or competitive behaviour.

[ ] Estimate peak attendance—not just average attendance—by considering the number of customers expected to arrive simultaneously, the length of time they may wait outside, historical attendance, promotional demand, and the possibility that actual turnout will exceed forecasts.

[ ] Assess the likelihood of a sudden surge by identifying circumstances that could cause customers to rush simultaneously, including doors opening, merchandise being released, limited inventory announcements, price reductions, and changes to queue arrangements.

[ ] Identify crowd-concentration points by mapping entrances, vestibules, checkout areas, narrow aisles, escalators, stairways, promotional displays, service counters, and other locations where people may converge or become trapped.

[ ] Assess the risk of crowd pressure from behind by determining whether people at the back of a queue or line could push forward and compress customers or employees at the front, particularly where lines approach doors, walls, barriers, or narrow passages.

[ ] Review previous incidents and near misses by examining reports of crowd surges, aggressive customer behaviour, blocked entrances, falls, queue disputes, worker injuries, and emergency interventions at the facility and comparable locations.

[ ] Establish safe occupancy limits by verifying the permitted occupant load under applicable building and fire codes and considering whether particular areas, such as a sales-floor promotion zone or vestibule, require lower operational limits because of their layout.

[ ] Evaluate the capabilities of the facility by determining whether entrances, exits, corridors, stairs, and emergency escape routes can accommodate the anticipated customer volume without dangerous congestion.

2. **Entrance, Exit, & Queue/Line Controls**

Instructions: *Take measures to prevent customers from accumulating in uncontrolled groups or pushing against one another as they enter.*

[ ] Establish designated waiting areas by setting up clearly marked customer queues well away from entrance doors, vestibules, and other confined spaces.

[ ] Don’t allow waiting customers to gather immediately against the doors.

[ ] Install suitable crowd barriers using stable barricades, stanchions, or rope systems to create orderly queue lanes.

[ ] Design the configuration to prevent customers from bypassing lines, converging suddenly, or pushing directly toward entrances.

[ ] Use offset queue/line arrangements, where appropriate, by incorporating turns and breaks into barricade lines to reduce the transmission of forward pressure through a long, tightly packed queue.

[ ] Avoid configurations that create narrow bottlenecks or trap customers.

[ ] Separate incoming and outgoing traffic.

[ ] Prevent departing customers from colliding with incoming shoppers.

[ ] Maintain clear, independently managed routes wherever the building layout permits.

[ ] Control access in manageable groups by using metered entry rather than opening doors to a large crowd at once.

[ ] Release customers in controlled batches, allowing sufficient time for those already inside to move away from the entrance.

[ ] Prevent unauthorized early access by ensuring that doors aren’t opened prematurely and that customers can’t enter through unmonitored entrances, loading areas, or other access points.

[ ] Keep emergency exits accessible by ensuring that queue lines, promotional displays, merchandise, shopping carts, and temporary barriers don’t obstruct exits, exit doors, or evacuation routes.

[ ] Check doors and entrance structures.

[ ] Verify that doors, hinges, glazing, vestibules, and other entrance components can withstand anticipated operating conditions.

[ ] Ensure that workers aren’t positioned in places or circumstances where they could be pinned against doors or barriers.

[ ] Provide clear queue instructions by posting visible signs identifying where customers should line up, when doors will open, how entry will be controlled, and where customers should go for help.

3. **Staffing, Supervision, & Worker Protection**

Instructions: *Workers should never be expected to physically hold back or absorb the pressure of a surging crowd.*

[ ] Assign a designated crowd-control supervisor in charge of crowd safety, with authority to delay opening, suspend sales activities, restrict entry, or shut down the event.

[ ] Ensure that adequate trained personnel are provided.

[ ] Rather than relying on ordinary sales-floor staffing alone, determine necessary staffing levels based on the anticipated crowd size, number of entrances, queue configuration, facility layout, and potential congestion points.

[ ] Assign specific employee positions in charge of monitoring outside queues, entrances, exits, promotional areas, checkout zones, and other identified risk points.

[ ] Don’t leave critical areas unattended during peak periods.

[ ] Determine the need for specially trained security or crowd-management personnel if ordinary security presence is inadequate.

[ ] Establish employee exclusion zones that keep workers out of the direct path of incoming crowds and away from positions where they could become trapped between customers and doors, walls, counters, or barricades.

[ ] Prohibit physical crowd restraint by untrained staff.

[ ] Prohibit employees from attempting to hold back surging crowds, standing in front of advancing groups, or using their bodies as barriers.

[ ] Provide reliable communications by equipping supervisors and designated crowd-control personnel with radios or another dependable communication system.

[ ] Establish a common communication channel and simple emergency messages.

[ ] Establish a clear chain of command so that all workers know who can order an entry suspension, close a promotional area, call emergency services, or initiate an evacuation.

[ ] Provide event-specific employee training before the event that includes a review of crowd hazards, assigned positions, entry procedures, warning signs of dangerous congestion, emergency communications, and withdrawal procedures.

4. **Customer Flow & On-Site Crowd Monitoring**

Instructions: *Be mindful that crowd conditions can deteriorate quickly even when the initial queue appears orderly.*

[ ] Monitor crowd density continuously by assigning personnel to observe queues and high-traffic areas for signs of compression, pushing, surging, loss of personal space, or restricted movement.

[ ] Watch for red flags of a potential crowd-crush emergency, such as customers who are being pushed involuntarily, unable to move freely, losing their footing, becoming visibly distressed, or falling.

[ ] Maintain unobstructed movement routes by keeping aisles, cross-aisles, checkout approaches, and passageways clear of merchandise, temporary displays, shopping carts, and other obstructions.

[ ] Avoid placing highly desirable or limited-quantity merchandise immediately inside entrances, at the ends of narrow aisles, or in locations that induce customers to converge and create dangerous bottlenecks.

[ ] Keep customers from rushing toward a limited supply or item by using orderly distribution methods such as ticketing, timed releases, customer limits, and designated pickup points.

[ ] Manage queue disputes and line jumping.

[ ] Appoint designated personnel to address customer disputes early and head off arguments, attempts to cut lines, or other actions that may cause riots or trigger sudden crowd movement.

[ ] Make frequent and audible announcements that provide customers consistent instructions about waiting times, entry procedures, merchandise availability, and changes to the event.

[ ] Ensure different workers don’t send customers conflicting messages.

[ ] Monitor parking lots and exterior approaches.

[ ] Control pedestrian and vehicle interactions, particularly where customers may leave parked vehicles and rush toward entrances or attempt to join queues from the side.

[ ] Account for changing weather conditions including ice, snow, rain, poor lighting, and other outdoor hazards that could cause customers to slip, trip, fall, or bunch together.

[ ] Keep exterior access and emergency routes clear at all times.

5. **Emergency Response & Crowd-Surge Procedures**

Instructions: *Ensure that the response plan addresses crowd crushing and trampling and not just conventional fire evacuation or customer disturbances.*

[ ] Establish clear stop-entry triggers, that is, objective conditions requiring employees to stop admitting customers, such as excessive queue density, loss of orderly movement, blocked access routes or crowd pressure at an entrance.

[ ] Authorize the designated crowd control supervisor to immediately stop merchandise releases, giveaways, door-crasher activities, or other crowd-generating events at any time without waiting for senior management approval, in response to specified triggers, including situations where:

- Customers are pushing forward involuntarily or can’t move freely.

- People are falling, stumbling, or being forced against barriers or doors.
- A queue is becoming compressed or unstable.
- Customers are bypassing barriers or converging on an entrance.
- Workers can no longer safely perform their assigned crowd-control duties.
- Emergency exits or access routes are becoming obstructed.

[ ] Establish a rapid entry-shutdown procedure.

[ ] Train workers to communicate an immediate suspension of entry while ensuring that doors and exit routes remain available for safe emergency exit.

[ ] Establish a recognizable radio message or other alert that immediately notifies security, managers and designated employees of dangerous crowd surges or movement.

[ ] Establish worker withdrawal procedures.

[ ] Train workers to move out of the path of a surging crowd and toward designated safe locations rather than attempting to intervene physically.

[ ] Establish emergency notification procedures.

[ ] Designate personnel to contact 911 and communicate the location, nature, and severity of the incident, including any suspected crush injuries or people trapped in the crowd.

[ ] Plan for rendering assistance to injured or fallen customers but ensure those procedures neither permit nor require workers to rush into unstable or unruly crowds to rescue or treat injured or fallen individuals.

[ ] Establish procedures for obtaining emergency medical assistance and protecting responders from being caught in continuing crowd movement.

[ ] Do not direct employees into an unstable crowd to retrieve fallen individuals.

[ ] Plan for controlled dispersal or evacuation.

[ ] Identify how customers will be directed away from dangerous congestion without creating a second surge or sending people toward another bottleneck.

[ ] Coordinate with emergency responders.

[ ] For major events, consult local police, fire services, and emergency medical services in advance about anticipated crowd size, access routes, response arrangements and the location of potential congestion points.

[ ] Conduct a pre-event briefing or drill that walk workers and security personnel through the crowd-control plan, emergency signals, shutdown authority, and withdrawal routes.

6. **Post-Event Review & Corrective Action**

Instructions: *Review the effectiveness of your crowd control measures after major events.*

[ ] Document crowd-related incidents and near misses.

[ ] Record falls, pushing, queue breakdowns, aggressive behaviour, blocked routes, unauthorized entry, and situations requiring intervention, even where no actual injury or property damage occurs.

[ ] Review whether crowd limits were respected.

[ ] Compare actual attendance and queue conditions against planned capacity and operational thresholds.

[ ] Determine whether staffing, barriers, signage, metered entry, and communications worked as intended.

[ ] Ask employees and security personnel for feedback,

including regarding where crowd pressure developed, which procedures were difficult to implement, and whether they felt exposed to danger.

[ ] If necessary, revise the crowd-management plan to correct identified deficiencies before repeating the event or using the same arrangements at another location.

7. **Ongoing OHS Program Controls**

Instructions: *Incorporate crowd control and safety into your company's regular occupational health and safety management system.*

[ ] Include crowd crush in workplace hazard assessments.

[ ] Treat large customer gatherings and uncontrolled crowd movement as foreseeable hazards, even if the operation has never experienced a serious incident.

[ ] Apply the plan even on ordinary operating days.

[ ] Establish controls for unexpected crowd concentrations arising from flash sales, product shortages, service disruptions, holiday periods, and other unplanned events.

[ ] Review contractor and security arrangements.

[ ] Ensure that contracted security personnel, event organizers, and promotional vendors understand their respective responsibilities and follow the employer's crowd-management procedures.

[ ] Inspect crowd-control equipment including barricades, stanchions, ropes, signage, communications equipment, and other devices for damage, stability, and suitability.

[ ] Integrate crowd safety into emergency planning by ensuring that the workplace emergency plan addresses crowd surges, crushing, trampling, blocked escape routes, and

emergency access for first responders.

[ ] Review your crowd control risk assessments, staffing requirements, training, and emergency procedures at least once a year as well as in response to actual incidents, complaints, significant changes to facilities, business operations, or promotional activities, and other indicators that your current program is ineffective or no longer suitable to current conditions.