Concept Note
on

District Outreach Training Program on
Managing Crowd at venues of Mass Gathering with special orientation to Fire Safety

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Concept Note

Managing Crowd at venues of Mass Gathering with special orientation to Fire Safety

1. Background:

Mass gatherings, due to their nature, fall into the category of unique events since they have the potential for incidents, injuries, and even fatalities. Tragedies of people being trampled to death have taken place at religious gatherings, mass processions, election rallies and even at music concerts etc. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a total of 3216 incidents of stampede have taken place in India between 2001 and 2014, leading to 2421 casualties. Moreover, 79% of all such stampedes in India occur at places of worship. The high incidence of such stampedes in India highlights the need for effective crowd management in the country.

Given the ubiquity of crowded places, Indians tend to have a high tolerance for them. Thus, it is important to understand how crowds operate. As soon as the word "crowd" is heard, the first instinct is to "manage" them, if not control them. Given the unusual number of stampedes taking place at religious congregations in the country it is important to manage these crowds both efficiently and creatively.

An event of Mass Gathering is generally characterized by huge number of people accumulating in a very limited space in a short span of time. Different regions, religions and faiths have their own ways of celebrating their festivals. Generally, these celebrations end up becoming an event of mass gathering.
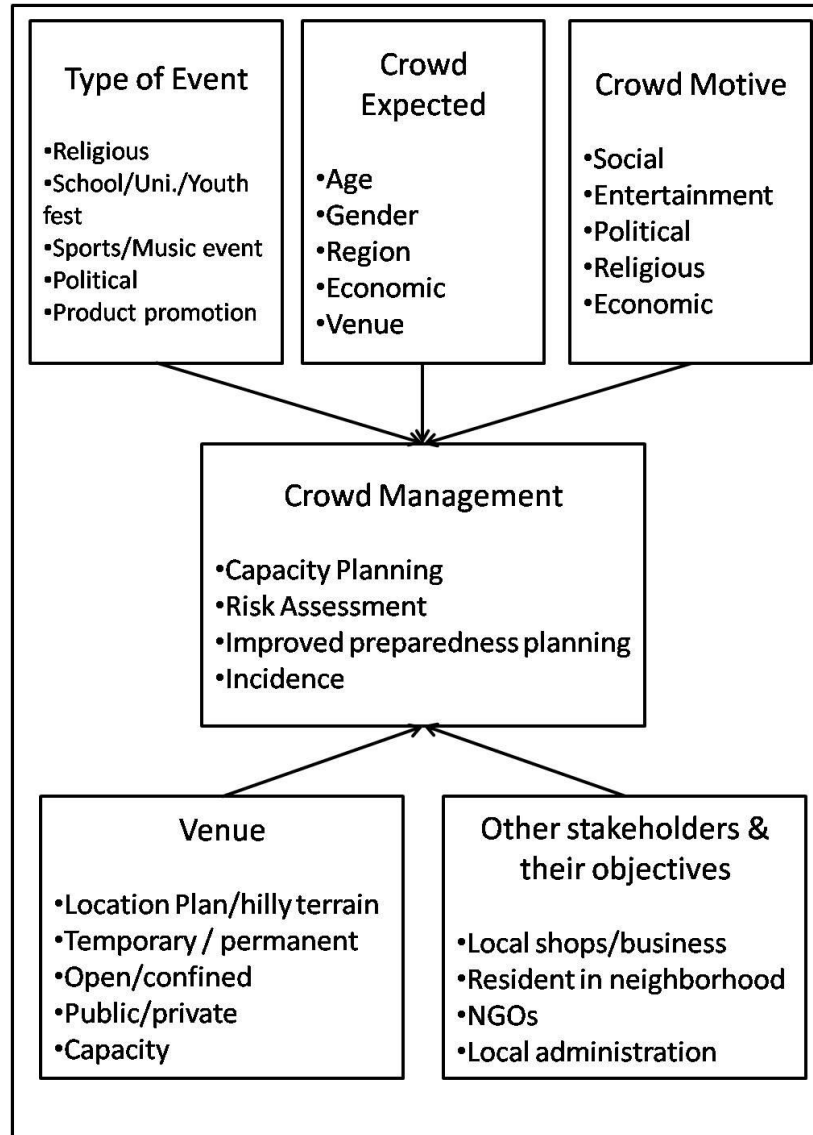
With such events, it becomes imperative for the local administration/ government to get involved and make arrangements to keep the conduct of the events as smooth as possible. They need to prepare themselves according to all aspects of disaster management, health, hygiene and medical care, mass casualty engagement, media relations, security of people, and care for vulnerable groups, etc.

Such events, though observed for a limited time, sometimes attract a crowd, which if not managed carefully can lead to a catastrophe. The following are some critical crowd management issues which should be considered by the organizers of any mass gathering:

a. Mix of visitors on the basis of age, physical fitness, gender
b. Religious sensitivity of the devotees for religious functions
c. Managing the waiting time for the devotees at the gathering
d. Ensuring cleanliness of the venue
e. Providing a reasonable degree of comfort to the waiting devotees
f. Medical assistance for the sick or injured people
g. Special arrangements for infants, children, old and infirm devotees

2. Processes Involved on Crowd Management:

The integrated approach for the crowd management can be pictorially represented as given below:

Source: NDMA "A Guide for State Government, Local Authorities, Administrator and Organizer" 2014

3. Planning for Crowd Management:

Special events always require special management measures, including non-routine investments of public resources to cope with the large crowds they draw. Some of the crowd control strategies are listed below:

a. Evaluate temple capacity, inclusive of all waiting areas considering reasonable waiting time – compare with requirement
b. Shorten duration of religious procedures for faster turnaround
c. Carry out crowd congestion analysis - identify bottlenecks in crowd movement
d. Make provision for adequate space in waiting areas to reduce claustrophobia

e. Quick exits with proper and well-lit signage

f. Forced ventilation in waiting areas to prevent heating and air quality deterioration

g. Multiple queues for different types of visitors: elderly, women and children, differently abled

h. Crowd safety training to employees/staff and security personnel – implement active and passive surveillance

i. Improve access to premises from outside – alter location of offerings shops, decentralization of markets and shops near the gathering

Identification of main organizer/sponsor and other key stakeholders prior to event and regular consultation with them is also important, since many times last minute changes are made which require adjustments in the planning of events and crowd management. Many at times, it is observed that the administration avoids adopting a multi stakeholder approach along with identification of new risks.

3.1. Religious Events:

India has experienced major crowd related disasters over past years. The majority of these disasters are related to religious festivals. Statistics show that more than 70% of crowd related disasters in India have occurred during religious celebrations.

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has published a guiding tool on "Managing Crowd and Events and Venues of Mass Gathering – 2014". It has also reference to different actions in managing the crowd efficiently and process involved in organizing the events and its closure. There is mention of quick response teams along with coordination teams with relevant departments.

In view of the guidance tool, there is no specific tool for on crowd management in the aftermath of incidence caused by natural disaster any manmade disaster in the state. Hence, proposing a training program involving concern stake holders.

3.2. Targeted Participants:

The target group for this program will be the officials involved in managing the crowd at Dev Sthan Management (Managers and Administrators) and Festival Fair Organizers, Revenues Department (District Project Officers), Home Department (Police Inspectors, PSI), Health Department (RMO/Superintendents), Gujarat Tourism official etc.

4. First Response Training:

The focus of this training may also on enhancing the skills of first responders in employing simple yet life-saving First-Aid as well as Fire Fighting techniques that can be carried out with minimal resources during any emergencies. Sessions on crowd management techniques will focus on techniques for crowd control, surveillance and situational awareness. Topics will include crowd dynamics and behavior analysis,

deployment of staff, effective communication strategies, perimeter management, necessary response protocols and more. Interactive simulations will be used to provide hands-on learning to participants in handling different crowd scenarios - from usual gatherings to emergency situations of stampedes, violence or health issues in crowds.

A major section of the training will concentrate on First-Aid and Fire Safety aspects. This will include detailed study of types of fire risks prevalent during mass gatherings and strategies to minimize them through infrastructure checks, maintenance protocols and prohibition/regulation of risky activities. Participants will learn about international fire codes, standards of construction, provisions and placement of fire detection and suppression equipment as per size and nature of venue.

Practical demonstrations followed by hands-on sessions will be conducted on operating various types of fire extinguishers, other equipment. Proper inspection techniques, emergency procedures and protocols including sounding of alarms, coordination between relevant departments during response and evacuation will be practiced. The importance of multi-hazard approach, contingency plans and mock drills will also be emphasized.

A dedicated session will give guidance on hosting large religious/cultural events involving open flames, effigies etc. while ensuring utmost fire safety. First aid and basic life support techniques useful during medical emergencies in large crowds will strengthen participants' crisis response skills. Emphasis will be on teamwork and inter-agency coordination vital for efficient disaster management.

4. Expected Outcomes:

The expected outcome of the proposed training program is to:

Develop understanding of stakeholders (Departments, agencies, institutions & NGOs and communities at large on effective crowd Management processes.

Develop a Preparedness plan taking care of the underlying

    i.Community Engagement

    ii.Preparedness measures, capacity building and training needs.

    iii.Preparation of QRTs

    iv.Developing SOPs on crowd management suggestions and inputs for functional role and delegation of power of authorities on crowd management.

    v.Authorities and references: Institutional arrangement for District and Taluka level and concerned authorities

    vi.First-Aid and Fire Safety

        a. Participants will develop a comprehensive understanding of the fire risks associated with mass gatherings and learn strategies to minimize them through infrastructure checks, maintenance protocols, and the regulation of risky activities.

vii.Practical Hands-On Exercise/Demonstrations on First-Aid and Fire Safety

  a. Participants will learn to operate various types of fire extinguishers and other fire-fighting equipment through practical demonstrations and hands-on sessions.

  b. Participants will receive guidance on hosting large religious or cultural events involving open flames, effigies, and other potential fire hazards while ensuring utmost fire safety.

  c. They will learn first aid and basic life support techniques that can be useful during medical emergencies in large crowds, strengthening their crisis response skills.

  d. Participants will recognize the importance of teamwork and inter-agency coordination, which are vital for efficient disaster management during large-scale events.

By focusing on these components and utilizing available resources, first responders can be better prepared to handle stampedes effectively, minimizing injuries and saving lives.

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