

MANAGING CROWDS AT MASS GATHERING VENUES

Special Focus on Shri Arasuri Ambaji Mata Devsthan Trust

Date: 27th Oct., 2026 time: 10:45 to 17:15 Hrs.

1. Background and Rationale

Ambaji is one of Gujarat's most important pilgrimage destinations and a major centre of mass gatherings. The Ambaji Temple attracts large numbers of devotees throughout the year, particularly during full-moon days and major religious occasions. The annual Bhadarvi Poonam Mahamela represents a significant mass-gathering event, with approximately 1.5 million devotees reported to attend the fair. The scale, duration and spatial spread of such gatherings create complex requirements for crowd movement, pilgrim facilitation, traffic management, public safety, emergency medical care, fire safety and inter-agency coordination.

The risk at a mass gathering is not determined solely by the number of people present. It is influenced by the relationship between crowd size, available space, movement patterns, access and exit arrangements, the physical environment, weather conditions, transport systems, emergency access, communication systems and the capacity of authorities and organisers to detect and manage emerging risks.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Guide on Managing Crowd at Events and Venues of Mass Gathering adopts a structured and integrated approach to crowd management. It emphasises capacity planning, understanding crowd behaviour, hazard and risk assessment, development of courses of action, information management, safety and security, emergency medical services, transportation and traffic management, Incident Response System (IRS), unified control, Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) arrangements, technology and stakeholder coordination. The Guide also envisages that crowd-management plans for specific venues and events should be integrated with disaster-management plans at the appropriate administrative levels.

The Disaster Management Act, 2005 provides the national legal and institutional framework for disaster management, including responsibilities of disaster-management authorities, government departments and local authorities. The Act provides the basis for preparedness, mitigation, response, coordination and capacity building at different levels of governance.

At the State level, the Gujarat State Disaster Management Plan (GSDMP) provides the framework for disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response, coordination, capacity building and the assignment of responsibilities among stakeholders. The

State-level disaster-management framework is intended to support coordinated action and clarity of roles across the administrative system.

In this context, crowd management at Ambaji should be understood as an integral component of disaster risk management and not merely as a law-and-order or traffic-management function. It requires a coordinated, risk-informed and multi-agency system extending from pre-event planning and risk assessment to real-time monitoring, incident response, emergency medical care, evacuation and post-event review.

Accordingly, the Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management (GIDM) proposes a specialised District Outreach Training Programme titled: Managing Crowds at Mass Gathering Venues: Special Focus on Shri Arasuri Ambaji Mata Devsthan Trust.

The programme is intended to strengthen the capacity of personnel directly involved in the planning, management, safety and emergency response arrangements for pilgrim gatherings at Ambaji.

2. Training Objectives

Upon completion of the programme, participants will be able to:

- Understand the fundamentals of disaster risk management in the context of pilgrimage and mass gatherings.
- Identify key factors contributing to crowd emergencies and apply basic principles of crowd-flow, capacity and queue management.
- Understand essential elements of crowd-management planning, including risk assessment, emergency access, evacuation and scenario-based preparedness.
- Strengthen preparedness for medical emergencies, fire incidents and other emergencies during large pilgrim gatherings.
- Develop practical skills in fire prevention, life safety and the use of fire extinguishers and basic emergency equipment.

3. Key Focus Areas

The training will focus on the following four thematic areas:

- **Crowd Management** – Understanding crowd behaviour, crowd flow, capacity, queue management and basic planning for safe pilgrim movement.
- **Fire Safety and Life Safety** – Identifying fire risks, adopting preventive measures and learning the correct use of fire extinguishers and safety equipment.

- **Emergency Preparedness and Response** – Strengthening preparedness for medical emergencies, fire incidents and other emergencies during large gatherings.
- **Inter-Agency Coordination** – Improving coordination, communication and role clarity among agencies involved in pilgrimage and crowd management.

4. Training Methodology

The programme will combine expert-led classroom sessions with case studies, interactive discussions and practical demonstrations. Sessions will cover disaster risk management, crowd management, risk assessment, emergency preparedness, fire safety and inter-agency coordination, with specific reference to the operational context of Ambaji.

Practical learning will include demonstrations and hands-on exercises on the use of fire extinguishers and basic safety equipment, enabling participants to develop greater confidence in responding to emergencies during large pilgrim gatherings

5. Target Participants

The programme is intended for officials and functionaries involved in the planning, management and safety of pilgrim gatherings at Ambaji, including representatives of temple and pilgrimage management authorities, district administration, police and security agencies, fire and emergency services, health services, local authorities, transport agencies, volunteers and other relevant stakeholders.

6. Duration and Mode

The programme is proposed as a one-day, in-person training programme from 10:45 AM to 5:15 PM, comprising expert-led sessions, case-study discussions, interactive learning and hands-on practical demonstrations.

TENTATIVE TRAINING AGENDA

Managing Crowds at Mass Gathering Venues: Special Focus on Shri Arasuri Ambaji Mata Devsthan Trust

27th October., 2026

Time	Session	Key Focus	Speaker/ Expert
10:45–11:00	Registration and Reporting	Registration and participant interaction	Ambaji Trust/ GIDM
11:00–11:45	Understanding Disaster Risk Management (DRM): Basics and Context	Basic concepts of hazards, vulnerability, capacity and risk; disaster management cycle; and the relevance of DRM to mass gatherings and pilgrimage venues.	Dr Sandeep Pandey GIDM
11:45–12:45	Strategies for Effective Crowd Management	Crowd characteristics and behaviour; legal provisions and stakeholder responsibilities; crowd-management planning, logistics, crowd flow, capacity building and coordinated response through the Incident Response System (IRS).	Shri Nilesh Dubey
12:45–13:45	Operational Challenges and Lessons: Case Study	Practical challenges in managing large pilgrim gatherings at Ambaji, lessons from past major events and key measures for effective crowd management and risk reduction.	Shri A.A.Sheikh, Dy. S.P., GRD,/Administartor Ambaji Temple
13:45–14:45	<i>Lunch Break</i>		
14:45–15:15	Fire Prevention and Life Safety at Mass Gatherings	Fire hazards; electrical safety; prevention; emergency access; life safety; response arrangements	Station Officer, Fire & Emergency Services

Time	Session	Key Focus	Speaker/ Expert
15:15– 16:00	Practical Demonstration and Hands-on Exercise	Fire extinguishers; emergency equipment; practical response actions	Station Officer, Fire & Emergency Services
16:00– 17:00	Basic Life- Saving Skills for Emergencies (Theory & Practical)	Scene safety, casualty assessment, bleeding control, basic first aid, CPR awareness, safe casualty handling, and hands-on practice on CPR, victim handling, splinting, improvised stretcher techniques, etc.	108 Official/ Doctor
17:00– 17:15	Key Takeaways, Feedback and Conclusion	Summary of learning; participant feedback; concluding remarks	Ambaji Trust/ GIDM