

Safety and Security: 2 Commonly Misunderstood Event Risk Management Terms

By Wayne Middleton, Global Vice President Risk

Safety and security are essential elements to successful events and must be prioritized as part of an event risk management plan. While these concepts might sound simple, they are often used incorrectly or misinterpreted by venues and event organizers as being one in the same.

To help you avoid any misunderstanding and ensure you deliver successful events, this article will define safety and security and explain their different applications at events. Learn about the importance of a 'steady state,' the 'all hazards' approach to risk management and why the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) ISO 31000:2018 is considered a best practice approach to event risk management.



Differences Between Event Safety and Event Security

While the terms safety and security are often considered interchangeable, they are related, but are different areas of risk and need to be treated as such. The simplest way to understand safety and security is to review their definitions.

According to the Collins Dictionary, safety is the state of being safe from harm or danger whereas security refers to all the measures that are taken to protect a place or to ensure that only people with permission to enter it or leave it.

Taking these definitions into consideration, let's look at the difference between safety and security in terms of their application to event risk management:



Event safety

Event safety is achieved through the limitation and mitigation of avoidable accidents (i.e. crowd crush, trip hazards, dangerous goods, occupational health and safety) by the implementation of effective risk management activities (i.e., elimination, substitution, engineering, administrative and personal protective equipment), to achieve an acceptable level of risk — otherwise known as a 'steady state.' The source of an unsafe condition can be deliberate or accidental.

Event security

Event security is the process of mitigating potential threats (i.e., terrorism, crowd violence, criminal acts etc.) by the implementation of effective event risk management activities (i.e., deterrence, detection, delay, response and recovery) to maintain a 'steady state' and allow the event to continue as planned. A security threat involves a deliberate threat actor.

Why “Steady State” is the Key to Successful Event Delivery

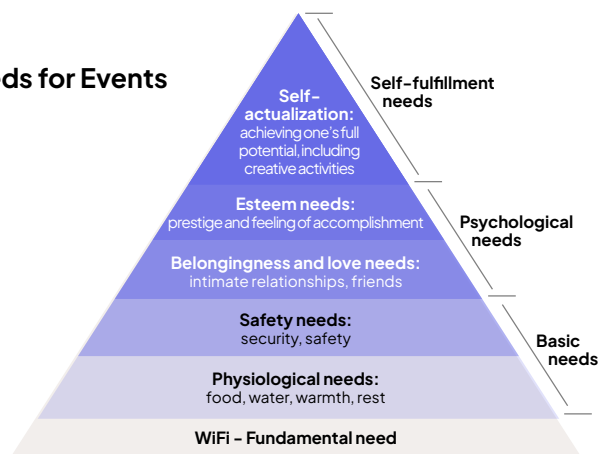
A “steady state” is an event risk management term used to describe a scenario where the conditions of the event are:

- **Safe:** Effective risk management activities have been implemented and are working to limit and mitigate hazards that represent an undue risk of injury to the public.
- **Secure:** Effective risk management activities have been implemented and are working to protect individuals from deliberate attacks from threat actors.

While safety and security do work together to achieve a “steady state,” they are different domains and have separate stakeholders and risk mitigation methods. Additionally, their professional operators have qualifications that differ from security and their impact can have legal implications.

As indicated in the diagram below, according to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, safety and security are basic human needs. If we translate this into an event setting, achieving a ‘steady state’ by mitigating safety and security hazards and addressing physiological and social needs can be more important than the content of the event itself — after all, it does not matter how great the entertainment or service level is, if a person feels unsafe. This can define their customer experience at the event.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs for Events



Pro Tip: Safety and Security Are Equally Important

Security is often perceived to be of greater importance than safety because of the emotional response that security risks elicit. For example, a death due to murder can be considered by the broader community as worse than a death in a car crash, even though, in many countries, road fatalities are far more common than homicides. In an event or public venue setting, public injuries from slip, trip and fall hazards are typically the most common incidents and often dominate liability insurance claims so they should be given more attention.



The Importance of an “All Hazards” Approach

Health and safety laws in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (UK) impose strict duties on venue operators and event organizers to apply reasonably practicable measures to manage the health safety risk to staff, contractors as well as the public. However, in the United States and Canada, under relevant occupational safety and health laws, employers are only responsible for their workers and not members of the public. This significantly impacts the motivation of venues and event organizers to adopt effective event risk management practices.


Given the health and safety legislation in Australia, New Zealand and the UK, the evolution of risk management as a discipline has helped some venues and events make better risk-based decisions. This has included an “all hazards” approach to risk management, where anything of significance that could affect the success of the event is considered a potential risk. In these regions, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) ISO 31000:2018 is recognized as the industry standard for a best-practice approach to event risk management. It ensures the consistent monitoring and improvement of risk management policies and procedures to mitigate safety and security risks, as well other risks that threaten to success of the event.

Safety and Security Starts With a Risk Management Plan

Every event has different goals and objectives. However, the safety and security of people at your event must be the highest priority. To truly ensure safety and security, event organizations should have a risk management plan because it will help you define risk as ‘the effect of uncertainty on objectives.’ By establishing these objectives when challenged by difficult decisions, determining their impact and likelihood of occurrence, it can help event organizers prioritize decisions that align with the overall goals and objectives of the event.

Risk Manager by Momentus Technologies is a solution to help venue and event stakeholders manage risks. Discover how you can leverage our purpose-built solution to improve event risk management at your venue.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Disclaimer: This e-book is intended for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional risk management advice. You should work with your own legal and risk experts on any risk management plans you create for your venue or events, regardless of whether you choose to use this e-book or not. Momentus Technologies is not responsible for your use or reliance on any information contained in this e-book. If you do not agree to these terms, you may not use this e-book.