

# Law Enforcement Engagement in Planning for Mass Casualty Remembrance Events

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# Introduction

Deadly mass attacks have occurred at schools, places of worship, nightclubs, workplaces, grocery stores, movie theaters, entertainment venues, and more. Incidents across the globe involving attacks with firearms, explosives, edged weapons, and vehicles continue to take place despite our best efforts at prevention. Communities—some, like Newtown, Parkland, and Uvalde, largely unknown before their incidents—are thrust from obscurity into unexpected fame; their recovery from the horror of these deadly attacks takes place under a public spotlight.

Their recovery, however, often reveals the resilience and splendor of the human spirit. The impacted community members rise to support one another through the tough days that follow. Some of the toughest days come on the annual remembrance<sup>1</sup> of the event each passing year. Survivors, their families, and the families and loved ones of victims have diverse needs and expectations on these days: Some want to be in a public setting surrounded by community, while others prefer space and privacy to grieve and remember on their own. Communities across the nation host remembrance events where they can come together to formally commemorate the lives of the lost and support one another in the grieving process. These events bring attention from the media and the public at large. Whether or not the community intends to host a remembrance event, the remembrance day will draw attention—not always in the form of support.

Law enforcement has a supporting but crucial role to play in planning and preparing for remembrance days to support community unity, safety, and healing. It's also recommended that law enforcement be part of the coordination

efforts with the community groups and service providers managing the needs of the survivors and the families and loved ones of survivors and victims. Preparation is critical to the health, safety, security, and welfare of the community planning a remembrance event, and one critical consideration for planning remembrance events is the community's relationship with local first responders. If law enforcement has come under criticism for its response to the attack, this local friction can create challenges when those same agencies step forward to engage in planning efforts and any subsequent security for events. However, it is important that community leaders understand the significance of establishing and maintaining an attitude of preparation and planning for the annual commemoration of the incident. At a minimum, community and law enforcement leaders should maintain consistent situational awareness: Is a group planning to visit on the date to make a political statement? Is a politician or celebrity planning to visit?

It is also critical to acknowledge the trauma associated with these attacks. Communities that have endured these tragedies and held subsequent remembrance events are eager to share lessons learned about how they have dealt with the wide range of emotions that can come into play as a one-year mark approaches. Grief counselors, victim advocates, and family support networks play a significant role in ensuring that planning efforts consider the impact of trauma on individuals and the community at large. With these considerations in mind, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and Jensen Hughes team recommends the following factors be evaluated by law enforcement and other community leadership during the planning phase for annual remembrance events.

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1. These events have also been called commemoration events. The goal is to remember loved ones rather than commemorating the tragedy itself.

# Organizational Structure

For local municipal leadership and law enforcement, the most critical element of preparation and planning for an annual remembrance event is to identify and understand the other stakeholders: Who is or should be part of the discussion? While this group will inevitably shift and change, identifying and formalizing a core structure will facilitate establishing committees and assigning responsibilities. In addition, there must be an owner or driver of the event. The widely varying focus areas of a large stakeholder group can make identifying this owner challenging, but establishing a clearly defined leader is integral to successful planning. The following are some suggested stakeholders to invite to the table for discussions regarding remembrance events:

- Local municipal leadership offices
- Local law enforcement agencies
- Local fire departments
- Emergency medical services
- Emergency management
- Communications director(s) / public information officer(s) for all relevant agencies/organizations
- Fusion center
- Local government legal counsel
- Direct victims and survivors and their family members
- Victim advocate(s)
- Counseling or resiliency center point of contact
- Emotional counseling and grief centers
- Faith-based organizations
- Public works
- Department of Transportation
- Chamber of Commerce or other local business coalitions
- National Guard
- State police
- Federal agencies
- County health department
- Hospitals
- Charitable organizations

# Remembrance/ Commemoration Day Activities

It is important that community leaders and other stakeholders center the planning and preparation around the needs and expectations of those most directly impacted: survivors and the family members and loved ones of survivors and victims. These needs will vary within and among these groups: Survivors and loved ones cannot be treated like a monolith. Deliberate and careful discussions should start early. Law enforcement and other organizers should be prepared to formulate a strategy that accommodates diverse needs, expectations, events, and space for the survivors and loved ones. Planning and preparation should be trauma-informed, victim-centered, and culturally responsive. The National Mass Violence Center (NMVC) has ideas for activities and approaches online at <https://nmvvc.org/community-leaders/rebuild-your-community/remembering/>.

Too many communities have needed to plan and prepare for these types of events; communities can learn from their lessons learned and promising practices. For example, following the Route 91 Harvest tragedy in 2017, the Las Vegas community worked with victims, survivors, and loved ones to create a series of events for their first remembrance day. A sunrise ceremony, organized by the county, was open to the entire community and included speakers, live music, and a slideshow of each of the victims who was lost. The ceremony ended with a release of doves. Later in the day, families and some survivors walked around the venue with large posters featuring the 58 victims. The day ended with a City of Las Vegas candlelight event with a reading of names and ringing of bells. These events have continued through the years, and some of the events have evolved into the Route 91 Family Reunion.

In Parkland, Florida, the community dedicated a week of activities called “Acts of Love” leading up to the first anniversary of the shooting at the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School, with events including a beach day and providing food to first responders. During the school day, students had an opportunity to participate in four different service activities prior to an early departure. The afternoon included lunch and various wellness activities, such as breathing

activities, yoga, and rock painting. The day ended with a community ceremony. Throughout the ceremony, media was restricted to a specific area.

No matter how the remembrance looks, it is vital that trauma-informed therapists and counselors be available throughout the community.

## Information and intelligence gathering

An integral function of event planning is understanding stakeholder viewpoints. Information and intelligence gathering on these viewpoints may include gathering information about the levels of public awareness and interest, the trauma impact on the community, the number of people expected to attend an event, possible protest locations, and protest participants with a history of violence or other criminal behavior. To gather the information necessary to gauge the appropriate level of response in preparation and planning efforts, the planning committee can leverage existing relationships with stakeholders or build new ones, as well as monitoring traditional and social media.

The process for monitoring, reporting, and disseminating intelligence information must be formalized, with goals and objectives and resources dedicated to obtaining information. Such an approach leads to greater clarity, accuracy, and timeliness of information that may impact the planning process.

It is also critically important to ensure the formal process includes a communication plan by which appropriate security measures are applied to the exchange of law enforcement-sensitive information. The process should provide guidance on inquiry management; who can make requests and how? How are requests communicated and vetted to ensure the broader group stays informed?

Informal processes lead to redundant efforts and delays in identifying information and reporting it to leadership.

# Incident Management

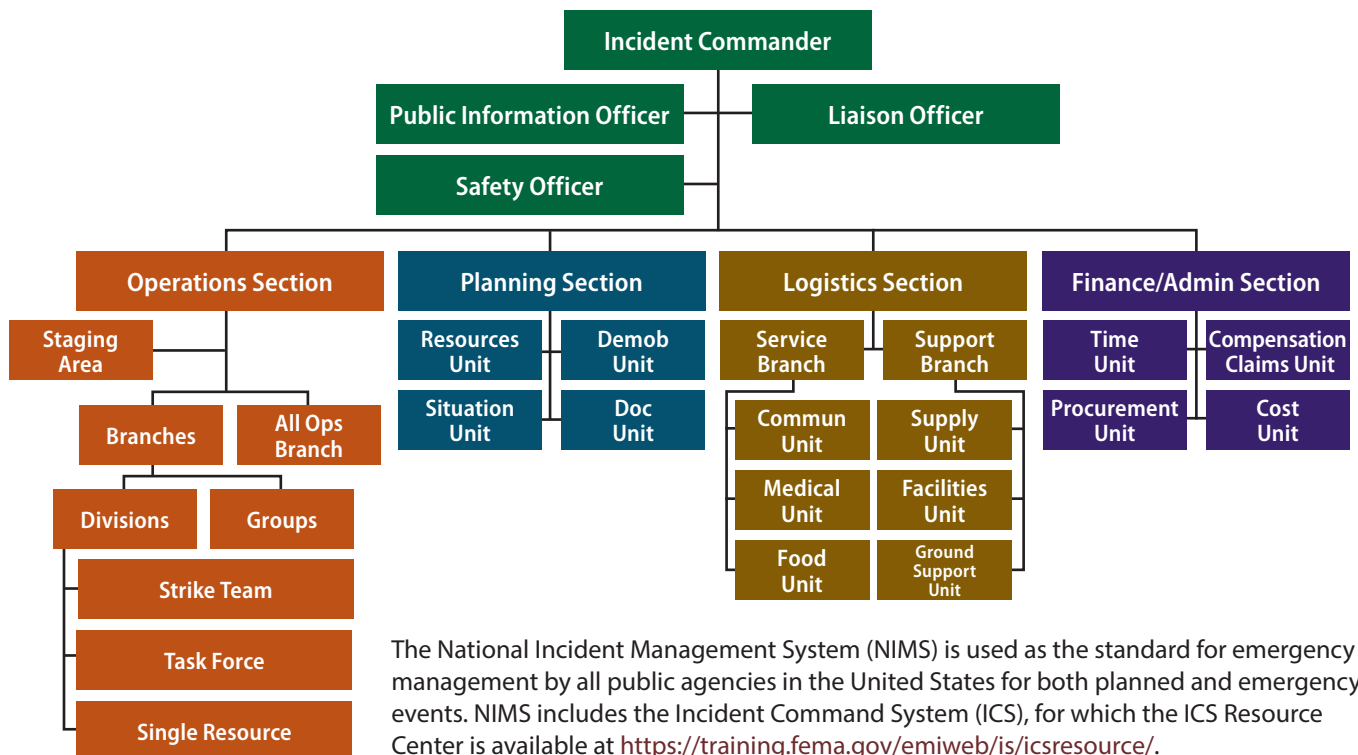
Helping communities plan for a remembrance event is like planning for any other large gathering: It is best to have systems in place for protecting public safety in the event of any sort of critical incident. While the focus of this document is on remembrance events, the principles of incident management outlined in this section can be used when planning for any large-scale events.

Many municipalities train for events, but thankfully most will never encounter a critical incident. The rarity of such events, however, makes it all the more important to have plans in place for addressing them. Creating a structure for responding to critical incidents is the challenge of effective incident command: the people, systems, and processes that help address the evolving issues typical during critical incidents such as demand for more resources; management of victims and families; need for medical resources; and ongoing coordination and communication in a complex, critical, and fast-changing environment.

For well over a decade, public safety agencies and first responders across the country have trained on emergency response. The generally accepted practice is to invest heavily in emergency response capabilities, including conducting training designed to improve overall responses, and to promptly address issues identified during this training. Much first responder training and other preparation- and prevention-oriented activities aimed at improving emergency response capabilities are based on the nationwide response framework called the Incident Command System (ICS).

At its core, ICS is an organizational framework for the efficient and effective command, control, and coordination of an emergency response to a critical incident. The foundation of ICS is a centralized command for deployment of resources and decisions. In complex or very large incidents involving multiple agencies with varying jurisdictional requirements, it is vital that a unified command be established to ensure key resources are collectively working

Figure 1. A typical Incident Command System organizational chart



to identify and address objectives through collaborative strategies predicated upon the effective use of resources. Most first responders have completed training on ICS, which is designed to facilitate the actions of public safety operations, including crowd-control efforts during protests, riots, and mass gatherings. Paramount to the ICS concept is the implementation of a dedicated command post and incident commander to provide centralized command of resources and decisions. Figure 1 on page 4 depicts a typical ICS structure for incident management.

The ICS structure can be deployed at any time, for anything—including an annual remembrance or any large-scale incident or event. Some agencies integrate ICS principles into all of their daily operations, from high-risk warrant service to speaking engagements in the local schools. Such an approach builds confidence and competence in incident management. While many smaller communities may not have the training or personnel to populate such a command response, the value of adhering to a centralized and organized structure for incident management cannot be overstated. Smaller agencies may not have a written operations policy aligned with ICS best practices, such as the activation of a command post, designation of an incident commander, and ensuring appropriate structure and support. These agencies are encouraged to form partnerships with larger agencies that can assist them with establishing a framework for managing all aspects of an event to decrease chaos and confusion.

Coordinated command is not easy, nor is it the routine approach of most first responders, particularly law enforcement. However, such command and control will prove invaluable as a cornerstone to the community's approach to preparation and planning.

## Operational plan

Under ICS principles, a planning section chief develops a comprehensive operational plan referred to as an Incident Action Plan (IAP). Even within agencies and circumstances where no planning section chief is designated, it is common practice to assign and develop a detailed written plan to guide the response to large-scale operations. Many agencies and jurisdictions have exercised the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as their incident management system and use its guidance for developing and implementing deliberate operational procedures.

A comprehensive operational plan supports the agency response, providing clear direction regarding the specific information that guides a large-scale operation. A detailed plan helps better guide the actions of the many disparate agencies' personnel in providing services and response to large and complex events. A detailed operational plan should identify who is tasked with making command decisions, describe roles and responsibilities, and make specific assignments; this detail helps provide clarity and create a more seamless multijurisdictional response. The plan should provide a structured framework for the who, where, what, why, when, and how of an operation.

In some smaller communities, where resources are not abundant, the practice of creating operational plans may not be a routine practice. At times, the task of developing a plan is assigned to first-line supervisors, who may lack sufficient direction and information—or the training, knowledge, or experience—to develop a plan. This can lead to the creation of incomplete or basic plans that lack clarity on roles and responsibilities. It is important to engage stakeholders in developing a comprehensive plan, so that other entities can share their insight and offer their experience.

As communities embark on planning for scheduled remembrance events, they should be guided by the principle “plan early, plan often.”<sup>2</sup> It is critical to begin planning efforts well in advance of the anticipated event to ensure adequate resources are reserved in time. A schedule for stakeholder committee meetings should be established early to ensure tasks and initiatives are progressing at an acceptable pace. A best practice is to assign subcommittees: This provides an opportunity for smaller subject matter expert workgroups to carefully develop their specific portions of the plan to be presented to the committee of the whole, with the regular committee meetings as a platform for progress reporting and information sharing. Of critical importance through this process is progress on objectives: Subcommittees must be held accountable for achieving objectives; weeks of inactivity should be promptly addressed.

While not every operational plan for a remembrance event will include the same focus areas, we offer the following suggestions for strong consideration for the public safety component. If they are included, it is recommended that these areas be assigned to dedicated subcommittees:

- **Mutual aid agreements and Memoranda of Understanding for assistance**
- **Command and control – Command Post primary and secondary**
- **Intelligence**
  - ◆ Where, who, how – information exchange
- **Radio communications**
  - ◆ Interoperability
  - ◆ Are repeaters required for the service area to extend radio coverage?

- **Patrol operations**
  - ◆ Maintain routine patrol of the jurisdiction
  - ◆ Don’t depend on patrol to handle operational elements that require specially trained officers and special equipment
- **Traffic control**
  - ◆ Road closures
  - ◆ Designated detours in emergencies
    - Signs and equipment staging – pre-planning with public works
- **Explosive detection**
  - ◆ K-9 sweeps of venues
  - ◆ Assign security or law enforcement immediately following sweep to maintain integrity of site
- **Explosive ordnance response teams**
- **Air support**
  - ◆ Surveillance
    - Establish communications
      - Ideally establish remote video viewing capability at Command Post / Emergency Operations Center (CP/EOC) or to tablets for field commander(s)
  - ◆ Fixed-wing aircraft surveillance on the outer perimeter to monitor incoming traffic patterns
  - ◆ Rotor aircraft surveillance for focused operational efforts
  - ◆ Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)
    - Establish communications
      - Ideally establish remote video viewing capability at CP/EOC or to tablets for field commander(s)

2. The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) funds an Improving Community Preparedness to Assist Victims of Mass Violence or Domestic Terrorism: Training and Technical Assistance Project, or ICP TTA. The project’s main goal is to incorporate victim service elements into existing emergency response plans, which often lack this element. To learn more, visit the ICP TTA home page at <https://icptta.com/>.



- **SWAT**
    - ◆ Overwatch
    - ◆ Quick response force
    - ◆ Stage transportation (vans) strategically throughout area, out of sight
      - Provide maps depicting points of interest and relevance
  
  - **Mobile field force (MFF)**
    - ◆ Stage transportation (vans or buses) strategically throughout area, out of sight
    - ◆ Establish designated arrest teams
      - Provide maps depicting points of interest and relevance
  
  - **Mass arrest plan**
    - ◆ Dispersal orders
      - Approved by local prosecutor / court system
      - Multiple announcements
        - Record and document announcements – by who, when, and how
    - ◆ Mobile booking
      - Arrest packets
      - Identification – link arrestee and officer
    - ◆ Transportation – buses primary, vans secondary
    - ◆ Off-site processing
      - Considerable distance from venue(s) to discourage disruption
      - Ensure adequate jail space and corrections staff in advance
  
  - **Motor unit**
  
  - **Bicycle unit**
    - ◆ MFF-trained and -equipped personnel preferred for rapid response
- 
- **Mounted unit**
    - ◆ Trained with MFF in advance of event for seamless response
  
  - **Undercover officers**
    - ◆ Establish communications
    - ◆ Establish identifiers and code word/phrase to mitigate blue-on-blue
  
  - **Interpreters – as applicable**
  
  - **Off-site staging area / quartermaster**
    - ◆ Large area to accommodate vehicles and personnel
    - ◆ Military bases, college campuses, event halls (not affiliated with remembrance)
  
  - **Establish a robust command and control / logistics element**
  
  - **Ensure robust communications for briefings**
  
  - **Food and water**
    - ◆ Ensure all delivery and logistical support is coordinated to support personnel deployed to venue(s) during operational period
  
  - **Overstock on all equipment**
    - ◆ Less-lethal munitions – have a pre-planned alternative supply
  
  - **Transportation to/from site**
  
  - **Lodging**
    - ◆ Staging area – outreach to Red Cross etc. for cots
    - ◆ Local dormitories
    - ◆ Local hotels
    - ◆ Transportation

- **Clergy/Chaplain**
- **Venues**
  - ◆ Free speech area(s)
    - Opposing viewpoints
  - ◆ Security services
  - ◆ Emergency response plans
    - Review in advance
  - ◆ Screening procedures
    - Metal detection
    - Credentialing
    - Careful not to exclude individuals/groups from otherwise public venues
  - ◆ Sanitize area – remove objects that can be used for destruction or to conceal weapons
  - ◆ Parking
  - ◆ Protective measures
    - Bike rack, temporary fencing, screening, portable lighting, cameras
- **Additional planning considerations:**
  - ◆ National Guard
    - Establish communications with other first responders
    - Point of contact
    - Know the formal request process and designate the responsibility in advance
    - Escalation/deployment protocols
      - Must assign an officer liaison
      - Clearly define roles and responsibilities in advance
    - Staging (include with law enforcement staging when possible)
  - ◆ Fire Department(s)
    - Establish communications with other first responders
    - Strategic posting in venue(s)
    - Staging (include with LE staging when possible)
    - Conflagration prevention
      - Designate LE detachment to accompany fire department when required for scene safety in their response
    - Response plan for mutual aid
    - Mass casualty – decontamination plan
  - ◆ EMS (Emergency Medical Services)
    - Establish communications with other first responders
    - Mobile & fixed first aid stations/carts
    - Medical staging area
    - Triage
    - Designate LE detachment to accompany EMS when required for scene safety in their response
    - Response plan for mutual aid
  - ◆ Legal counsel
    - Permit process for events
    - Dispersal orders
    - Guidance and support in arrest plans and officer communication
  - ◆ Hospitals
    - Establish communications with first responders
    - Urgent care / Trauma
    - Mass casualty
    - Triage
    - Decontamination

- ◆ Health Department
  - Event support
    - Food services
    - Sanitation services
    - Dumpsters
    - Recycling
- ◆ Venue preparation
  - Establish communications with POC for first responders
  - Complete description, location, jurisdiction
    - Floor plans
    - Access to video surveillance system
  - Coordination of security and law enforcement
  - Emergency response plan - review
- ◆ Chamber of Commerce – Business Association
  - Willingness to restrict hours
  - Willingness to host staged first responder resources
- ◆ Previous jurisdictions
  - Liaison with communities that have planned similar events
  - Compare operation plans
  - Investigate after action reviews / lessons learned

## Communications plan

Communications is a major component of any large-scale operation or incident. Development of a communication plan early in the overall planning process is encouraged. Stakeholders should collaborate on creating and approving any media releases or messages to inform the broader public of the community's events or intent. Best practice is to leverage broad stakeholder involvement and consensus to ensure consistency in messaging. Law enforcement must be aware that in many cases they will not drive the message—rather, the messaging may come from jurisdictional leadership, faith-based leaders, or victim advocacy. In any case, a single point of contact—a public information officer (PIO)—is often recommended to communicate with the media. The PIO should possess the necessary skill and rapport to interact with the media in a productive manner and ensure consistency in messaging. Scripted responses are strongly encouraged for officers responding to inquiries to support continuity in messaging and minimize risk of an inappropriate or inconsistent response.

# Trauma Impact

A variable associated with any mass attack annual remembrance is the wide range of emotions evoked in survivors, witnesses, family members of those lost, and first responders. These emotions will manifest as trauma in some individuals. While support is typically available through community outreach, grief centers, victim Resiliency Centers, and community advocacy groups, first responders in particular are often hesitant to reach out for assistance and to acknowledge and accept that they have been impacted by the incident. In the aftermath of some recent mass

shootings, law enforcement has been criticized vocally and publicly for their response. This criticism can lead to additional challenges when officers' trauma from the incident is compounded with a feeling that the public they serve has lost faith and trust in them, making outreach for support even more difficult.<sup>3</sup> Leadership throughout the jurisdiction of a mass attack must be aware of first responders' hesitancy to seek assistance and must remain vigilant in monitoring and identifying problem behaviors that may indicate an individual is suffering from trauma.

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3. In events where there is an OVC Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program (AEAP) award, law enforcement and others who responded to the incident are considered survivors and, as such, are eligible for services just like any other victims. This also applies to law enforcement family members. The vast majority of AEAP grants have funding for first responder services.

# About the Authors

Stephen Hines, Subject Matter Expert  
Senior Director, Security Risk Management  
Jensen Hughes

Chad McGinty, Subject Matter Expert  
Senior Director, Security Risk Management  
Jensen Hughes

Lindsay Morgan, PMP, Program Manager  
Senior Director, Project Excellence  
Jensen Hughes

Nazmia E.A. Comrie  
Sociologist (Policing Assistance and Reform)  
U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

This publication offers guidance for law enforcement agencies in planning and preparing for remembrance events commemorating the victims of mass casualty events. Focusing on incident management, it covers considerations for operational and communications plans, identifying and working with stakeholders, and the trauma impact of such events on the public and on first responders. A detailed checklist of public safety planning considerations is included.



**COPS**  
*Community Oriented Policing Services*  
*U.S. Department of Justice*

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services  
145 N Street NE  
Washington, DC 20530

To obtain details about COPS Office programs, call  
the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

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