

## Development of an Effective Infrastructure for Sport Venue Security

Lou Marciani, Stacey Hall  
and  
Walter Cooper  
University of Southern Mississippi

High profile sporting events in the United States have been identified by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as potential terrorist targets (Lipton, 2005). Since 9/11 the American sports industry has increased security at major sporting venues and high profile events such as the Super Bowl, World Series, and Olympics. Large scale sports stadiums provide a perfect target for mass casualties and catastrophic economic impact. Besides terrorism, other potential threats include drug/alcohol usage, fan violence, patron injuries, weather concerns, power failure, and sabotage (Fried, 2005). It is therefore imperative that sport venue managers employ an all-hazards approach to emergency planning.

The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) Center for Spectator Sports Security Management has emerged a leader in the quest to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from incidents at sporting venues. The Center focuses on building capabilities among those responsible for sports event security management. In May 2005, the Mississippi Department of Homeland Security and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency awarded USM a \$568,000 grant to create a research based model for effective security management of university sport venues. Vulnerability assessments were conducted at seven state-supported university stadiums in Mississippi with an average capacity of 70,000+. The vulnerability assessment process identified security weaknesses (industry gaps), highlighted “best practices”, and provided consequence reduction proposals at each institution.

Furthermore, the *Sport Event Security Aware (SESA)* system was developed through the Center’s research efforts as a means to improve capabilities of those involved in sport event security operations. The system involves a 4 step process of *assessment, training, practice, and audit*. These 4 key components assure the sport facility has conducted the appropriate security assessments, such as threat/risk and vulnerability assessments. Training is emphasized to ensure staff is adequately prepared and aware of their roles and responsibilities during game day and in the event of an incident. Sport organizations also need to have written and practiced emergency/evacuation plans in coordination with local emergency agencies. Finally, an unannounced game day audit is critical to the overall assessment of the venue and operations to guarantee plans and policies in place are carried out during game day.

The presentation will address the potential threats to sports events, discuss the DHS grant awarded to USM, and review the SESA system developed to be utilized by all agencies involved in protecting America’s sporting public.

### References:

Fried, G. (2005). *Managing sports facilities*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Lipton, E. (2005, March 16). U.S. Report Lists Possibilities for Terrorist Attacks and Likely Toll. *New York Times*, Section A, Page 1, Column 2.