

**Needs, Concerns, and Future Challenges in Security Management of NCAA Division I
Football Events: An Intercollegiate Facility Management Perspective**

**Stacey Hall, Lou Marciani, Walter Cooper and Jerry Phillips
The University of Southern Mississippi**

Abstract

High profile sports events have been identified by the Department of Homeland Security as potential terrorist targets (Lipton, 2005). According to Webb (2007), college sports events attract huge crowds and are an inviting terrorist target for mass casualties and media coverage. In addition to terrorism, sport facility managers are concerned with inclement weather, alcohol problems, and crowd management issues (Fried, 2005). However, previous research indicates a lack of training and education for key personnel responsible for responding to emergency incidents at college sports events (Baker, Connaughton, Zhang, & Spengler, 2007; Beckman, 2006; Cunningham, 2007; Hall, 2006). The purpose of this exploratory study was to determine the needs, concerns, and future challenges in security management at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I football events. The population for this study was limited to NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletic facility managers (n=235). Athletic facility managers have been identified as one of the key personnel responsible for security management operations at college football events (Hall). A total of 83 complete surveys were returned for a 35.4% response rate. The survey obtained general information on the institution, football game day operations information, and a security management needs assessment. Findings determined that 61% of the institutions outsourced their security, fire, and medical personnel. Several key areas of need identified by Division I football athletic facility managers included: 1) access to timely security information to help prevent, detect, and respond to incidents, 2) assistance in conducting vulnerability assessments, 3) emergency response training, and 4) the provision of crowd control workshops. Assessing needs will assist athletic departments in their future

planning of security systems and implementation of staff training and education. This promotes a safer environment for players, spectators, officials, and local community stakeholders.

Introduction

On September 11, 2001, a series of terrorist attacks changed the external environment of sports forever. In a post 9/11 world, college athletic administrators are now much more concerned with ensuring effective security management operations at their sports events (Baker et. al, 2007). College sports venues host millions of spectators providing an attractive terrorist target for mass casualties and media coverage (Webb, 2007). According to the NCAA Official Records Book (2007), approximately 48 million spectators attended NCAA football games during the 2006 season. The most notable terrorist-related incident at a college football event occurred in October 2000 when a University of Oklahoma student suicide bomber detonated his device outside an 84,000 seat stadium (Hagmann, 2005).

In addition to terrorism, sport facility managers are concerned with inclement weather, alcohol problems, and crowd management issues (Fried, 2005). In February 2008, the NCAA Division I Football Committee convened to discuss an increased emphasis on crowd control during all rounds of the championship (Johnson, 2008). Committee members are empowering on-field officials to stop a game when the safety of participants and fans is compromised because of an incident. The NCAA (2008) is also proposing that institutions who fail to manage crowd control could lose the chance to host postseason games. Several incidents in recent years have contributed to the increased concern for fan and player safety. In February 2007, the Southeastern Conference fined Vanderbilt \$25,000 after its fans rushed the basketball court after upsetting No. 1 Florida. During that same incident a Florida Gators freshman student-athlete was

caught on camera punching a Vanderbilt fan (Diamond, 2007). The Florida International-Miami football game on-field altercation in October 2006 took two dozen police officers to control and resulted in 31 player suspensions (Associated Press, 2006). In September 2005, Louisiana State University (LSU) fans pelted beer bottles at a University of Tennessee bus after the Volunteers came from behind to defeat the Tigers in overtime (Associated Press, 2005).

Natural threats in the form of inclement weather have caused devastation to sports programs in recent years. Hurricane Katrina affected many professional and college sports programs in the Gulf Coast region and New Orleans area. The New Orleans Saints played home games in three different cities during 2005 and the Hornets resided in Oklahoma City for the 2005-2006 season (Matheson & Baade, 2006). Louisiana State University is still dealing with the financial impact of Hurricane Katrina. The athletic department lost or paid other schools approximately \$3.5 million, plus an additional \$400,000 for on-campus facility damage (Steinbach, 2006).

Organizations should attempt to prevent or deter potential threats due to legal obligations, business continuity issues, and reputation issues (National Counter Terrorism Security Office, 2006). In the event of an incident, written security plans, such as risk management, emergency response and evacuation plans may come under scrutiny. Stadium owners/operators have a duty of care to provide a reasonable level of safety to a sport spectator considered a business invitee (Carpenter, 2000). Sauter and Carafano (2005) emphasized the importance of business continuity planning as organizations must have contingency plans in place in the event of an incident and possess the capabilities and financial resources to return business operations to normality as soon as possible. Loss of reputation is another major concern for management. The

sporting public or local community may not trust the sport organization in the future if the facility does not react well to crises. This can have negative financial repercussions.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to determine the needs, concerns, and future challenges in security management at NCAA Division I college football events. Identifying security management needs will assist athletic departments in future planning of security systems and in the implementation of staff training and education. This ultimately will promote a safer environment for players, spectators, officials, and local community stakeholders.

Facility Security Issues

There are approximately 1055 NCAA Division I, II, and III institutions in the United States (NCAA.org, 2008). During the 2006 football season, approximately 48 million spectators attended NCAA football games (NCAA Official Records Book, 2007). The NCAA has issued a “Security Planning Options” document to assist institutions in their security planning for sports events. However, no sport event security standards currently exist for U.S. colleges. Therefore, security measures at these venues vary across the nation (Hall, 2006). In addition to the lack of consistent measures at college sport venues, there are no sport-specific event-security training and education programs available to athletic facility managers (Hall).

According to Cunningham (2007), 62% of assistant athletic directors for facilities at Division I football schools reported having no formal training, education, or certifications in event security management. Baker et. al (2007) reported similar findings while conducting a study of risk management practices at Division I-A schools. Nearly half (47%) of all respondents have not received training to guard against terrorist attacks at their facilities, even though managers for NCAA Division I-A football stadiums strongly agreed (M=4.26 on a 5-point Likert Scale) that terrorism is a foreseeable threat to U.S. sport facilities (Baker et al).

A Delphi study by Hall (2006) identified standards for effective security management at college sport venues. Training of key personnel emerged as a critical requirement and should be provided to ushers, vendors, and volunteers in the following areas: threat assessment, inspection procedures, credential recognition, and security awareness. Beckman (2006) also identified a need for staff training for event-security personnel. Webb (2007) noted that training key personnel responsible for decision-making on college campuses is an issue. Training in threat assessment and analysis is needed in order to ensure proper response and intervention to an incident. Training should include senior campus administrators, security and law enforcement leaders, risk managers, and communication specialists (Webb).

As evident from the current threats collegiate sport administrators face (Farmer, Mulrooney, & Ammon, 1996; Fried, 2005; Lipton, 2005), they must continue to plan and implement effective security management programs. However, previous research indicates there is a lack of planning and training of key personnel responsible for security management of college sporting events (Baker et. al, 2007; Beckman, 2006; Cunningham, 2007; Hall, 2006). This study explores the needs of intercollegiate athletic facility managers as they attempt to effectively secure their sport venues. Furthermore, it will determine whether there is a demand for training and education to meet the industry gap previously identified.

Methodology

The population for this study was limited to NCAA Division I (n=235) intercollegiate facility managers responsible for the security operational planning and preparedness for college football events. Intercollegiate athletic facility managers are responsible for football game day operations and they coordinate with multiple agencies in the community to ensure effective

security management systems are established (Hall, 2006). A total of 83 surveys were returned for a 35.4% response rate.

The survey instrument was developed by a panel of security experts who have backgrounds as academics and/or practitioners. Academic experts included individuals with a record of research in sport-event security management. Field-based professionals included individuals with experience in intercollegiate game-day security operations, representative of athletic facilities, campus police, and emergency management services. The panel made suggestions regarding questions to be included, added, or omitted. They were also able to determine whether the selected questions were relevant and understandable. After the initial review, three additional experts reviewed the survey to ensure content validity.

The final instrument consisted of three parts: 1) general information, 2) football game-day operations information, and 3) a security management needs assessment. Part one requested general information about the institution including football stadium capacity and attendance figures. Part two inquired about game day operations information including the number of personnel working football games and the institution's extent of outsourcing game-day staff. Part three identified sport venue security management needs in the following areas: planning, security exercises, training and education, conferences, publications, and security information data.

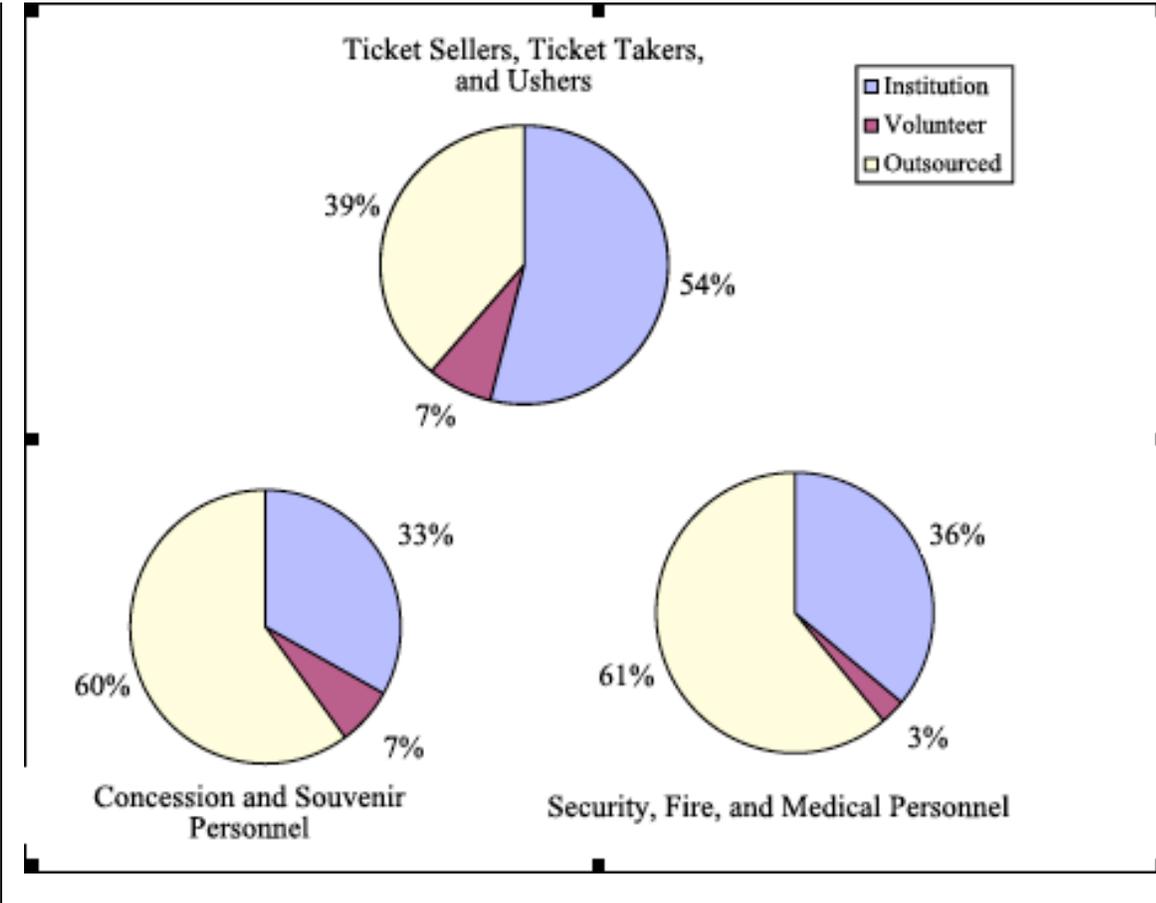
Participants were asked to respond to perceived needs by indicating "yes", "no", or "uncertain."

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval, surveys were distributed via U.S. mail to all NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletic facility managers (n=235). Participant information was obtained from the NCAA website. No incentive was offered for participation and participants were ensured anonymity. Questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS (version 11.0). Descriptive statistics and frequencies were recorded.

Results

Survey participants were responsible for managing football stadiums with a capacity of 2,000 to 102,000 spectators with an average capacity of 50,178. Attendance at football events ranged from 1,500 to 104,000, with an average attendance of 39,287. The average number of game-day personnel working football games at Division I institutions were 580. Participants were asked to indicate whether these game-day personnel were volunteers, hires from within the institution or were provided by an outsourced private firm. Figure 1 depicts the outsourcing of game day staff including security, fire, and medical personnel, ticket sellers, ticket takers, ushers, concessionaires, and souvenir personnel. Sixty-one percent of Division I intercollegiate athletic programs outsourced their security, fire, and medical personnel. However, over half (54%) of Division I programs hired ticket sellers, ticket takers, and ushers from within the institution.

Figure 1: Game Day Staff



Participants also completed a sport-venue security-management needs assessment that addressed the following areas: planning, exercising of plans, education and training, conferences, publications, and security information data. Table 1 highlights sport security needs for Division I intercollegiate athletic facility managers. The number one response was the need for timely vital security information to help prevent, detect, and respond to incidents (85.1%). Other critical needs identified include: assistance in conducting vulnerability assessments (65.2%); training for emergency response planning (63%); crowd control workshops (60%); an annual conference on sport event security best practices (61%); and risk/threat assessment training (58%). Furthermore, approximately 47% of athletic facility managers would like a certification program for all game-day personnel.

Table 1: NCAA Division I Football Security Needs Assessment

	YES	NO	UNSURE
	%	%	%
Planning			
Conducting a sport venue vulnerability assessment	65.2	23.9	10.9
Auditing a sport venue vulnerability self-assessment	54.3	32.6	13.1
Developing an emergency response plan	41.3	45.7	13
Developing a recovery plan	52.2	36.9	10.9
Exercise			
Conducting a tale-top sport event disaster exercise	45.6	28.3	26.1
Education & Training			
Conducting sport security emergency response workshops	63	23.9	13.1
Conducting certification program for all game day personnel	46.7	37.8	15.5
Conducting threat/risk assessment training workshop for athletic department operations staff	57.8	22.2	20
Conducting crowd control workshops	60	28.9	11.1
Conducting sport security grant writing workshop	40.9	40.9	18.2
Annual Conference			
Conduct annual conference on best practices for sport event management	60.9	17.4	21.7
Publications			
Publish sport security management e-newsletter	51.6	38.7	9.7
Publish sport security management research/application journal	55.5	28.9	15.6
Security Information Data			
Provision of timely vital security management information	85.1	6.4	8.5

Summary and Future Implications

Previous research (Baker et. al, 2007; Beckman 2006; Cunningham, 2007; Hall, 2006) identified an industry gap in training and education of intercollegiate facility managers in event security management. This study builds upon that knowledge by identifying key areas of need perceived by intercollegiate facility managers. Areas of need identified include: timely security information, crowd control workshops, threat/risk assessment training, and assistance in conducting sport-venue vulnerability assessments. Therefore, there is a demand by intercollegiate athletic facility managers to address the industry gap. An opportunity exists for

sport management and event management organizations to develop training related to sport-event security management.

Findings also determined that 61% of the security, fire, and medical personnel are outsourced, and 54% of ticket sellers, ticket takers, and ushers are hired either from within the institution or the local community. Whether staff are hired from within the institution, outsourced to a private contractor, or comprised of local volunteers, college athletic departments need to control the quality of personnel to oversee game-day security activities. Unfortunately, there are no standardized training and education requirements for support staff at college sport venues across the United States (Hall, 2006). Sport governing bodies need to address the lack of training and education and discuss the prospect of implementing standards, rules, and regulations to ensure effective and consistent security management of sport events.

In conclusion, intercollegiate athletic facility managers at NCAA Division I institutions identified a need for training, information sharing, and emergency preparedness to prevent, respond, and recover from incidents at sporting events. However, an industry gap currently exists to meet their training and education needs. The industry needs to work to produce future sport managers with adequate training in facility-security operations, determine adequacy of training provided by outsourced contractors, develop a certification for all intercollegiate athletic facility managers and security support staff working college football events, and develop an information sharing and analysis center (ISAC) for intercollegiate athletic staff to ensure access to timely and accurate security information.

Based on this study, the following recommendations are provided for Division I college athletic programs:

1. Intercollegiate athletic facility managers should obtain additional education and training in sport security management. the Federal Emergency Management Agency offers free certificate programs in emergency management and incident response through its Emergency Management Institute Online Program (<http://training.fema.gov/>).
2. Intercollegiate athletic departments should contract with a reputable firm to provide security and support staff (i.e. ticket takers, checkers, ushers, vendors) that are trained and certified to support the athletic staff during game-day operations.
3. Threat/risk assessment training is available through Texas Engineering Extension Service (<http://www.teex.com/>) at no cost and can be scheduled through the State's training coordinator at the State's Office of Homeland Security. Additional free training opportunities exist such as the Incident Response to Suicide Bombing training at New Mexico Tech delivered in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
4. Security information can be obtained from various sources such as the "Lessons Learned" website (<https://www.llis.gov>) developed by DHS. Additional support materials include the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) "planning options" for sport security and the International Association of Assembly Managers (IAAM) "best practices" guideline for security of large multipurpose facilities.

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