

ARE YOU READY?



Staying safe during events with big crowds



Photo courtesy iStockphoto—ShaneKato

What do football games, Fourth of July celebrations, music festivals and street parades have in common? They're all chances to sit back and relax, catch up with friends, celebrate the season and make new memories. And by following a few easy safety tips, you can make sure those gatherings are ones to cherish, not to regret.

Things to think about

Different large-scale events come with different risks. For example, a Fourth of July celebration can mean spending hours in the summer heat and possible dehydration, while a more high-profile event, such as the inauguration of a new president, can become a target for terrorism. Making preparations before attending such mass events as well as taking notice of safety features once you arrive can make a difference. Remember: Keeping safety in mind in advance can help you stay calm and think clearly in an emergency — it's a good asset to have if an emergency happens in a sea of hundreds or even thousands of people.



Photo courtesy iStockphoto—Lawrence Sawyer

Celebrating safely

Like with most preparedness activities, the first step is knowing what you're in for. Gather information about the event and its location in advance. For example, since some events come with high security, find out what you're allowed to bring to the event. How long will it last? How many people are expected to attend? What time should you arrive? Also, consider buying a map that shows where the event



is located and its surrounding areas. Study it beforehand in case you have to leave in a hurry and end up in an unexpected area. And don't forget to bring the map with you.

Check the weather before you go. During summertime events held outdoors, risk of dehydration and heat stroke are very real. Make sure you bring enough water to stay hydrated the entire time. Check to make sure personal water bottles and coolers are allowed inside the event – if not, make sure to bring enough money to purchase drinks to stay hydrated. Don't forget sunblock and a hat.

Before you hit the road, throw a small bottle of hand sanitizer in your purse or pocket. Being surrounded by so many people also means being surrounded by their germs – something especially important to keep in mind during flu season. Washing or sanitizing your hands regularly can help you avoid bringing home a nasty cold or the flu along with your souvenirs.

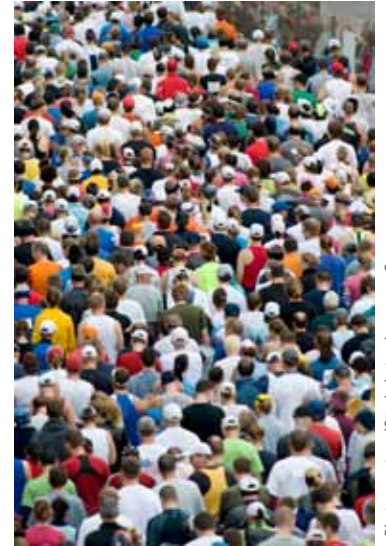


Photo courtesy iStockphoto—Lawrence Sawyer

Photo courtesy iStockphoto—Slobo

Once you arrive

Before settling down to enjoy the festivities, become aware of your surroundings. If you can, make a note of all the exits, and find out if there is a first aid station and where it's located. If an emergency does happen, stay calm, head for the nearest exit and listen for official instructions.

To help prevent dehydration during summer events, you may want to avoid caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, which increase the risk of dehydration. If you do plan to drink alcohol, make plans ahead of time for getting home safely.

Trust your gut. If you start to feel sick, overheated or woozy, ask someone – preferably an event official – for help. If you're able, head toward the first aid station. Don't worry about missing the celebration – your health is more important.

Also, remember to be patient. Some events attract overwhelming crowds. Staying calm can be your best ally in helping you and your loved ones stay safe.

