

PLANNING SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY EVENTS

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

While autumn brings cherished community festivities, it's vital to prioritize public safety and liability management. While these events foster pride and connection, assuming low incident rates means low risk can be misleading. Phrases like "We've never had a problem" may create blind spots. Accidents do happen, and their impact can be costly. Proactive planning and clear decisions about risks are essential to ensure everyone enjoys the season safely.

START WITH AN EVENT ACTION PLAN

Successful events start with thoughtful planning. Every gathering, parade, fair, or celebration comes with risks. Ask key questions: Can emergency vehicles access the area? Are crowd control measures in place? One parade committee reduced risk by banning thrown candy with a "no projectile" rule. Proactive steps like these help prevent accidents before they happen.

CLARIFY OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

Many community events are collaborative efforts involving local organizations, service clubs, and entity departments. While collaboration is key, clearly defining who is responsible for what and who handles specific tasks is essential, especially if the entity is the main sponsor. For broader efforts, appoint a planning coordinator to guide the process.

All participating groups should carry appropriate insurance, general liability, workers' compensation, and any other coverage relevant to their role. Service clubs are often covered under their national organizations, but verification is important. In some cases, incorporating the event and securing separate insurance may help protect the entity's coverage from being diluted.



IDENTIFY AND MANAGE RISKS

Use checklists, assign roles, and train staff and volunteers to ensure everyone is prepared. Share plans with fire, EMS, and law enforcement for coordinated readiness.

Be selective about event activities. High-risk activities like races, rides, fireworks, or alcohol require careful evaluation. If included, transfer risk through contracts with insured vendors or secure event-specific insurance.

INVOLVE THE RIGHT PARTNERS

Work only with properly licensed and insured vendors. Permits, licenses, and insurance should be part of event planning. A vendor without the right credentials can expose the entity to risk. Require proof of insurance and ensure the entity is named as an additional insured. **Insurance limits should match the level of risk involved.**

USE RISK TRANSFER TOOLS

Risk management goes beyond planning. Tools like indemnification agreements and vendor insurance help protect the entity. If hiring an event contractor, allow autonomy while maintaining accountability.

Even with risk transfer, entities are still responsible for public property. Address known hazards before the event to reduce liability.

SUPPORT NON-ENTITY EVENTS WITH CLEAR GUIDELINES

When outside groups host events on entity property, a special event policy can help guide organizers and protect the entity. This policy should outline expectations, insurance requirements, and the entity's role in supporting or approving the event.

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OUR PROMISE

Your IPARKS membership makes it easy for you to provide safe places to play, relax, and enjoy. By making safety a priority, we empower you to improve upon best practices and work in collaboration with your fellow members to protect your district, assets, and those you serve.

DOG PARKS

BEST PRACTICES

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

Dog parks have become very popular in recent years and provide a fun, social activity for both the dog and its owner. Dog parks enable dogs to exercise and socialize, both of which are important to their physical well-being and behavior. A well-designed and operated dog park can create a fun and safe environment for dogs and their owners.

However, dog parks do carry a certain amount of risk if not operated or maintained properly. These risks include:

- Spread of infectious diseases, such as kennel cough and canine influenza
- Threats of heat stroke on hot days
- Spread of fleas and ticks
- Aggressive dogs
- Irresponsible owners
- Dogs escaping the park

Therefore, when selecting the location of a dog park, the following should be considered:

- The area should be evaluated to ensure it is safe for both dogs and their owners.
- The location should be away from high-traffic areas.
- The location should not have any dangerous terrain, such as cliffs.
- The location should not be near any unmanageable water sources.



Consider the needs of park users as well as the effect the park will have on the neighbors and the nearby environment.

The size of the dog park can vary; however, it is recommended:

- The park should be no less than one acre.
- The surrounding barrier should include a four- to six-foot high chain link fence. The fence should be equipped with a double-gated entry to keep dogs from escaping and to facilitate wheelchair access.
- **There should be two separate fenced-in entry areas: one for large dogs and one for small dogs.**
- Cleaning supplies, including waste stations and dog waste bags, should be provided to encourage owners to pick up after their dog.
- Shade areas, such as shelters, should be provided for both dogs and owners, along with benches and tables. Metal shelters will need less maintenance than wooden shelters, as dogs may chew on wood support beams.
- Hand sanitizer should be provided.
- **Access to water should be provided for both dogs and their owners.**
- Dog park users should sign a waiver with the public entity prior to being granted access to the dog park.
- Dog owners should provide their dog's vaccination records to the public entity when the waiver is signed, prior to being granted access to the dog park.



Some agencies also require an annual membership fee.

Policies and procedures should be put in place that define who is authorized to use the dog park. A decision should be made if this will be through a membership or through a questionnaire approved by the public entity. The agency should also address and have procedures in place for securing the dog park from unauthorized individuals. This will help prevent sick dogs, animals other than dogs, and aggressive dogs from entering the dog park.

The approved dog owner should provide annual proof of current updated vaccines and rabies shots for the dog. These records should be kept on file. An ordinance should be put in place for the dog park, so the rules can be enforced by police officers, animal control officers, or any other code enforcer. Persons may be cited or ejected for failure to follow park rules.

An easily visible “Rules” sign should be posted at every entrance and clearly define all the rules dog owners are expected to follow. Key items should include:

- Hours of operation.
- The dog owner must have proof of permission to use the park.
- Dogs must be healthy and fully immunized.
- Female dogs in heat are not allowed.
- Small dog area size restriction.
- **Owners must always supervise their dog and not leave the dog alone in the fenced area.**
- **Owners are responsible to clean up after their dog.**
- **Owners must always carry a leash in the park.**
- All dogs must be on a leash outside the fenced area.
- An age restriction for children allowed in the park.
- The number of dogs allowed per person.
- Tobacco and alcohol are prohibited.
- Food and drink are prohibited inside the fenced area.
- The penalty to the dog owner if the rules are not followed.

Consult your Risk Control Specialist to answer any questions you may have or to perform an onsite visit.



CONCESSION STAND

SAFETY

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

Operating a concession stand requires strict attention to safety and sanitation, especially in temporary or outdoor settings. Key areas include fire prevention, food safety, hygiene, pest and waste control, equipment upkeep, and staff training. Following established protocols helps protect both patrons and personnel.

FIRE SAFETY AND EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

Fire safety starts with fire extinguishers, at a minimum. Operations involving grilling or frying also require commercial-grade hoods with fire suppression systems, which must be inspected and certified annually. Routine cleaning should be performed based on usage.

Inspect all equipment, including refrigerators, cooking appliances, and electrical systems, routinely to ensure safe, efficient operation.

FOOD SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Maintaining safe food temperatures is critical to prevent illness. Cold foods must stay at or below 41°F, hot foods at or above 140°F, and all temperatures should be checked with calibrated thermometers.

Follow cooking guidelines:

- Ground meats: 155°F
- Poultry: 165°F
- Leftovers: Reheat quickly to 165°F (do not use slow warming devices like crock pots)



Food storage must be safe and sanitary. Store items at least six inches off the ground and clearly label and date everything. To minimize risk, avoid using food prepared in private homes.

HYGIENE AND SANITATION STANDARDS

Hand hygiene is essential to food safety. A handwashing station with hot/cold water, soap, and paper towels is required. **While hand sanitizer may be used as a supplement, it is not a substitute for proper handwashing.** Food handlers must wear disposable gloves when working with food, and they must also wash their hands frequently.

Exclude anyone with symptoms like fever, vomiting, or open wounds from food service duties.



Clean and sanitize all utensils and surfaces using a three-compartment sink (wash, rinse, sanitize). Disinfect surfaces with an approved bleach solution (e.g., ½ tsp bleach per gallon of water).

PEST AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Pest control and waste management are vital for safe concession operations. Keep food covered and stored in airtight containers.

Keep pests out by sealing entry points and using traps as needed.

Dispose of waste responsibly. Use lidded trash bins and follow local regulations for wastewater. Never dump it outdoors.

STAFF TRAINING AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Clearly post emergency contact information in visible areas to ensure emergency readiness and staff safety. Train all personnel in food safety and equipment use, display safety reminders, and pair new staff with experienced workers. Enforce age restrictions (typically 16 – 18 years) for food and equipment handling.

Keep a stocked first-aid kit on-site and ensure only trained individuals provide medical aid. All staff must know how to locate and use fire extinguishers for quick emergency response.

Running a concession stand safely requires a proactive, disciplined approach. By enforcing strong practices in food handling, sanitation, equipment use, and staff management, operators can create a secure, hygienic environment that protects both workers and the public.

SECURITY CAMERAS

BENEFITS FOR PUBLIC ENTITIES

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

Security cameras have been a topic of debate for decades. Their introduction in 1949 has led to significant advancements, making it easier for businesses, organizations, and entities to adopt them.

Concerns about cameras in public spaces, such as cost, effectiveness, potential misuse, and public perception, exist. However, like most technology, competition in the market has driven down investment costs, improved quality, and added features like remote access from secure cellular devices, eliminating the need for late-night trips to the office. **Cameras provide accurate and detailed footage, deterring vandalism in areas like local parks.** To address misuse concerns, public entities should implement comprehensive policies and procedures defining access and circumstances. Studies show that the public doesn't perceive security cameras in public spaces as an invasion of privacy. In fact, they expect their presence in highly frequented areas.

The benefits of security cameras are undeniable.

Numerous entities have reported reduced vandalism after installing them. The added peace of mind they provide benefits both the public and staff. In today's staffing challenges, cameras have become increasingly valuable. Additionally, they enhance emergency operations plans by providing real-time footage, leading to quicker and more informed decision-making.

Initial hesitation about security cameras may exist, but the experience with body cameras in law enforcement demonstrates their protection of public institutions far outweighs any potential drawbacks.



IPARKS POWER GRANT



Each entity is eligible for either \$500, \$1,000, or \$1,500 in Power Grant funds dependent on contribution amount. In addition to safety items, the Power Grant has been expanded and can now be used for training & education, playground safety, and risk services. Visit www.iparks.org for more information.

TOP FIVE CYBER THREATS

TO WATCH FOR IN 2025 FOR PUBLIC ENTITIES

By: IPARKS Risk Services Team

Cyberattacks continue to escalate in frequency, sophistication, and impact on public entities. Agencies face mounting pressure to defend their systems against an evolving landscape of threats. In 2025, the most concerning cybersecurity risks stem from advanced persistent threats, supply chain vulnerabilities, and the increasing use of artificial intelligence by malicious actors.

1. RANSOMWARE-AS-A-SERVICE (RAAS) AND TARGETED EXTORTION

Ransomware remains one of the most dangerous threats to public entities. In 2025, attackers have professionalized their operations through Ransomware-as-a-Service platforms, allowing even low-skill criminals to launch devastating attacks. Public entities are particularly vulnerable due to limited IT budgets and outdated infrastructure. Attackers increasingly use double extortion tactics, encrypting data while also threatening to leak sensitive citizen information unless a ransom is paid.

2. AI-POWERED PHISHING AND SOCIAL ENGINEERING

Artificial intelligence is now being weaponized to craft highly personalized and convincing phishing emails. AI can scrape public data about officials and employees to generate tailored lures that are difficult to detect. Voice cloning and deepfake video tools are also being used to impersonate executives or trusted contacts, tricking employees into making unauthorized transfers or disclosing sensitive information.

3. SUPPLY CHAIN INFILTRATION

Public sector systems often rely on a patchwork of third-party vendors and service providers. In 2025, attackers are increasingly exploiting these supply chain relationships to gain indirect access to critical infrastructure. A compromise in a single vendor's software or hardware can serve as a backdoor into dozens, or hundreds, of interconnected networks.



4. INTERNET OF THINGS (IoT) AND SMART CITY VULNERABILITIES

As cities and counties adopt smart technologies to improve efficiency, from traffic systems to utility grids, they also expose themselves to new attack surfaces. Many IoT devices lack robust security and cannot be easily patched, making them easy entry points for attackers looking to disrupt essential services or cause physical damage.

5. INSIDER THREATS AND CREDENTIAL ABUSE

Whether intentional or accidental, insider threats continue to pose a major challenge. In 2025, compromised credentials are a leading cause of breaches. Threat actors often purchase or harvest login information from dark web marketplaces or phishing campaigns, then use them to access government systems undetected. Lack of multi-factor authentication (MFA) across many public sector platforms exacerbates the risk.

Proactive measures are critical to defend against these threats. Public entities must prioritize basic cybersecurity hygiene: enforce MFA, segment networks, implement immutable backups, and provide regular employee training. Threat detection tools using AI and anomaly detection should be adopted where possible, and public-private partnerships can help share threat intelligence and bolster defenses.





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If our mailing records need to be updated, please contact the IPARKS Service Center at (800) 748-0554, ext. 3136.
IPARKS newsletters are available for viewing and printing at www.iparks.org.

MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS

WELCOME TO THE IPARKS FAMILY

IPARKS has welcomed five new members thus far in 2025: Lake Barrington Countryside Park District, Douglas Park District, Milledgeville Unit Park District, Sumpter Township Park District, and San Jose Park District.

LAKE BARRINGTON COUNTRYSIDE PARK DISTRICT (LBCPD)

is a volunteer-run park district that provides recreational amenities to the community through an intergovernmental agreement with the Village of Lake Barrington. They offer tennis courts, a playground and pavilion area, spray park, soccer field, and baseball field.

DOUGLAS PARK DISTRICT

is home to beautiful Mann Park in Gilman. Mann Park delivers not only great recreational space for locals, but also gives vehicles passing through on Interstate 57 or Highway 24 a chance to rest and take in the park's scenery. The park offers a lake for fishing and a playground. It also provides recreational opportunities for pickleball and basketball and is the home field for the high school baseball team.

WELCOME

MILLEDGEVILLE UNIT PARK DISTRICT

offers three parks for visitors to experience. Their administration building downtown provides local youth with after-school programming. The largest of their parks, Millwheel Park, is located next to the town's school, and offers three baseball fields, basketball courts, and a playground. Youth programming includes T-ball, while adult leagues include co-ed softball, indoor wallyball, and sand volleyball.

SUMPTER TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT

located in the rural town of Cumberland, is home to a large community park. The park provides a ballfield, a large playground, and tennis and basketball courts to the community and will soon be adding pickleball. They also offer a large greenspace for organized soccer. The park district sponsors an annual summer youth activity program and is working on a future site to offer additional organized recreational

SAN JOSE PARK DISTRICT

offers a large community park off Highway 136 in San Jose. The park provides many recreational opportunities, including a playground, paved walking trail, ballfield, soccer fields, disc golf, and basketball courts. The park is host to the town's Market in the Park, where local agricultural businesses can promote and sell their products. The park district also offers two additional smaller parks downtown, including a band stand and war memorial.



IPARKS is the risk management affinity partner of Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), working to provide affordable, specialized coverage programs and valuable loss control resources for park districts, recreation and conservation districts, river conservancy districts, forest preserves and special recreation agencies.