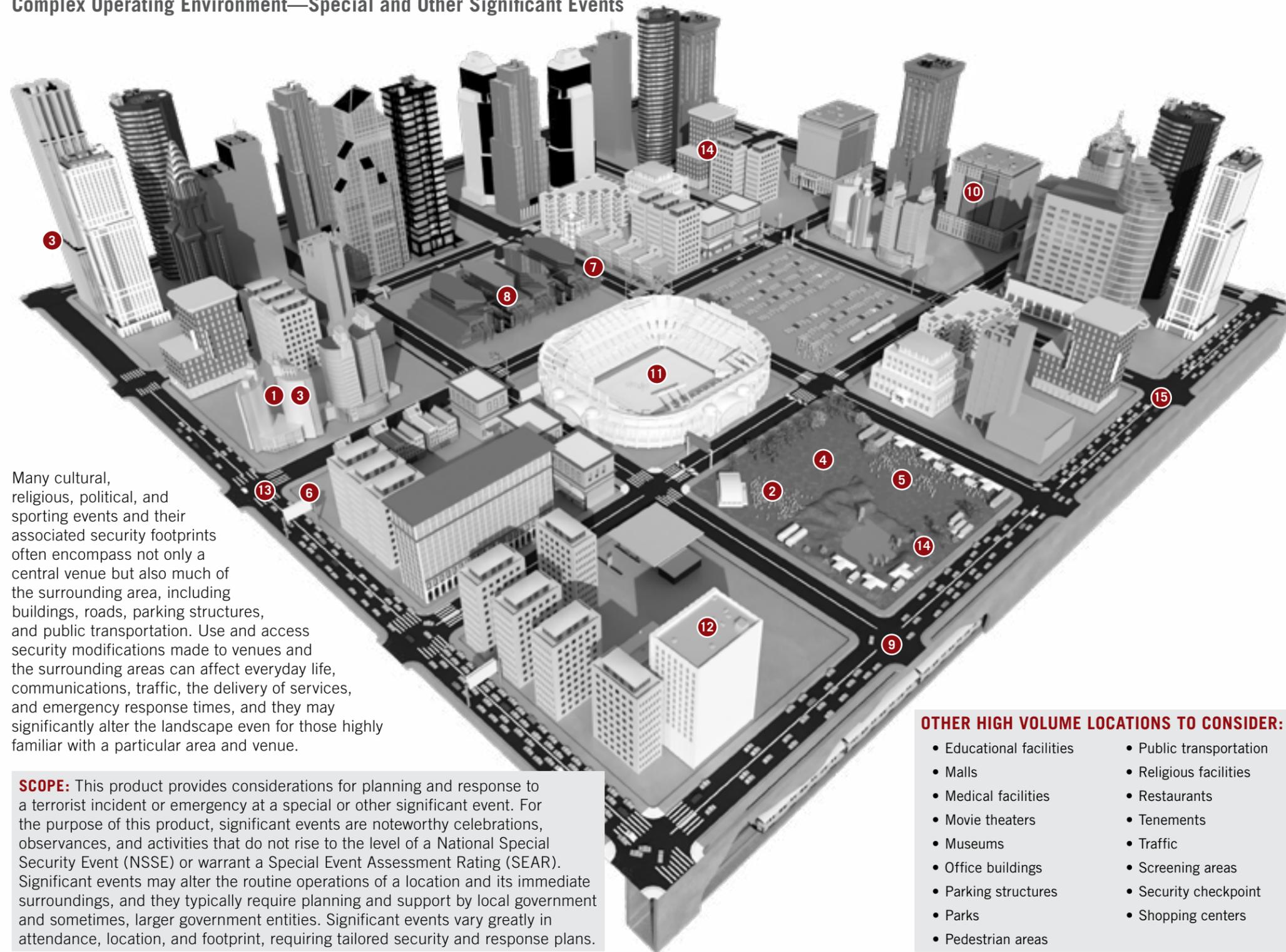## Complex Operating Environment—Special and Other Significant Events

Many cultural, religious, political, and sporting events and their associated security footprints often encompass not only a central venue but also much of the surrounding area, including buildings, roads, parking structures, and public transportation. Use and access security modifications made to venues and the surrounding areas can affect everyday life, communications, traffic, the delivery of services, and emergency response times, and they may significantly alter the landscape even for those highly familiar with a particular area and venue.

SCOPE: This product provides considerations for planning and response to a terrorist incident or emergency at a special or other significant event. For the purpose of this product, significant events are noteworthy celebrations, observances, and activities that do not rise to the level of a National Special Security Event (NSSE) or warrant a Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR). Significant events may alter the routine operations of a location and its immediate surroundings, and they typically require planning and support by local government and sometimes, larger government entities. Significant events vary greatly in attendance, location, and footprint, requiring tailored security and response plans.

		LOCATION	EVENT	ATTACK
1	09 OCT 2019	Hale, Germany	Yom Kippur Celebration	Firearms
2	28 JUL 2019	Gilroy, California	Garlic Festival	Firearms
3	21 APR 2019	Colombo, Sri Lanka	Easter Attacks	Suicide Bombings
4	11 DEC 2018	Strasbourg, France	Christmas Market	Firearms/Knife
5	1 OCT 2017	Las Vegas, Nevada	Route 91 Harvest Music Festival	Firearms
6	12 AUG 2017	Charlottesville, Virginia	Unite the Right Protest	Vehicle Ramming
7	22 MAY 2017	Manchester, UK	Ariana Grande Concert	Suicide Bombings
8	17 SEP 2016	Seaside, New Jersey	Seaside Semper Five-K	IED
9	14 JUL 2016	Nice, France	National Holiday Celebration	Vehicle Ramming
10	2 DEC 2016	San Bernardino, California	Office Party	IED/Firearms
11	13 NOV 2015	Paris, France	State de France Soccer Match	Suicide Bombings
12	3 MAY 2015	Garland, Texas	Art Exhibition	Firearms
13	15 APR 2013	Boston, Massachusetts	Boston Marathon	IED
14	22 JUL 2011	Oslo, Norway	Government Building and Youth Camp	IED/Firearms
15	18 JAN 2011	Spokane, Washington	MLK Parade	IED

OTHER HIGH VOLUME LOCATIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Educational facilities
- Malls
- Medical facilities
- Movie theaters
- Museums
- Office buildings
- Parking structures
- Parks
- Pedestrian areas
- Public transportation
- Religious facilities
- Restaurants
- Tenements
- Traffic
- Screening areas
- Security checkpoint
- Shopping centers

Firearms	Suicide Bombings	Vehicle Ramming	IED	Knife

Complex Operating Environment—Special and Other Significant Events *(continued)*

EVENT TYPES: Special and significant events include national, regional, or local holidays, observances, celebrations, gatherings, and other activities. Depending on the nature of an event, your state, local, or Federal governments can provide a wide range of resources, including funding, personnel, equipment, communications, agency referrals, and subject matter expertise. A significant international event held in the US or a purely domestic event may be designated either an NSSE or a SEAR event. NSSEs are infrequent and include Presidential inaugurations, summits, and national political conventions, and SEAR events are state and local events that occur with greater frequency and are ranked by risk of terrorist attack. SEAR 1– and SEAR 2–rated events may receive a Federal Coordination Team to support state and local officials. The Federal Government will work together to ensure unified support and to provide national situational awareness. This process may include DHS's designation of a Federal coordinator and the development of an Integrated Federal Support Overview.

CHARACTERISTICS: Special and significant events are often soft targets with characteristics that make them targets of opportunity, such as heavily publicized schedules, large crowds, and easily accessible venues. An attack against a special or significant event may cause mass casualties, potentially resulting in the rapid depletion of law enforcement, fire service, and medical resources. The development, implementation and execution of response plans should include stakeholders across jurisdictions working together to ensure adequate personnel, materials and equipment to address a range of emergencies.

VENUES: Although special or significant events may occur in outdoor venues, such as parks, stadiums, or city streets, or enclosed venues, such as arenas, centers, and halls, each has specific characteristics to factor into emergency response plans. The open nature of public venues makes them inherently vulnerable, though control measures can reduce risk. Security and access control points can restrict unauthorized entry and prevent prohibited items, like weapons, from entering the venue.

RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS: The security footprint for a special or significant event may extend past the perimeters of the event venue and have cascading effects on other critical infrastructure and bystanders. In this environment, deploying and controlling resources in response to a mass casualty event is challenging and critically important. The following are some planning considerations:

- **PHYSICAL BARRIERS:** During planned special or significant events, rings of concentric security are typically established to control access and maintain proper attendance levels. Barriers harden the targeted event by creating controlled entrance points for attendees and vehicles. Event planners should consider designated access points for emergency personnel, as barriers at general admission areas might make entry from the outer perimeter difficult for responding units. They should also consider predeploying assets (response, medical, HAZMAT, and decontamination teams, and related equipment) to handle issues inside the established zones. Furthermore, planners should consider alternate exit plans for attendees in the event of a crisis, including built-in release points to facilitate rapid egress from venues, significant training for venue staff and security, and signage for emergency egress.

- **SCREENING:** Large numbers of attendees may cause bottlenecking at predictable locations, such as security checkpoints, ticketing areas, restrooms, concessions and public transit stations. Event planners should anticipate other locations where crowds might unexpectedly gather, the challenges these crowds may create and how to alleviate bottlenecking.

- **COORDINATION:** An effective emergency response is dependent on multiple factors, such as event size, expected attendance, type, location, venue, and significance, as well as the level of public and media interest and the number of stakeholders. Close and ongoing coordination among all agencies involved will enhance awareness and establish unity of effort, which is critical under modified operations, affecting matters such as the effect of road closures on emergency response routes, resource staging areas, and command post location(s).

- **COMMUNICATIONS:** Special and significant events may incorporate Federal, state, local, and private-sector personnel and resources. Event planning must establish primary and alternate methods of communication, as well as interoperability for first responders, public safety officers, and security personnel. Landline and wireless networks may become overwhelmed or inoperable immediately after a catastrophic event; however, communications providers may provide alternative capabilities to mitigate the loss of commercial access. An effective communications plan will also help manage public concern, direct friends and family to reunification areas, and control crowds at the scene. The use of a common operating picture or virtual environment platforms, shared by all stakeholders involved in an event, allows all partners to remain abreast of any reporting or incidents affecting an event.

- **MEDICAL:** The large number of people of all ages—some of whom may have special needs—drawn to an area for a special or significant event might strain medical resources at the scene and at neighboring hospitals if a mass casualty event occurs. Coordinate and review mutual aid agreements, emergency service access points, ambulance routes, and medical staging.

TRANSPORTATION: For events that generate large numbers of visitors, the population of the areas surrounding the venue will increase dramatically, placing a significant demand on mass transit, including buses, commuter trains, subways, taxis, and ride-share services. Event planners should consider designated pick-up and drop-off buffer zones, as well as additional screening for hazardous devices at security perimeters. Escorts may be required for mass transit assets.

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS): First responders and emergency managers can use GIS tools and capabilities to support emergency response plans, establish access routes and points, and perform postattack damage assessments. GIS can be used to map an area, including critical infrastructures that might become affected. Information derived from GIS can provide near real-time intelligence and information for pre-staging emergency medical services, establishing evacuation routes and buffer zones, identifying lines of sight to preserve response times, and accounting for personnel and assets. Consider the following:

- Acquiring critical spatial information and high-resolution imagery from Federal, state, and local GIS experts

- Enhancing assessments and planning by incorporating blast analysis, plume analysis, and 360-degree photos for virtual walk-throughs, range ring effect, and generalized threat rings

- Establishing an in-house GIS capability

- Learning, training, and practicing using GIS tools to maintain proficiency

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (UAS): pose a unique threat to special events and mass gatherings. They can be weaponized and can interfere with lawful air operations. UAS are readily available from commercial sources, and as technology improves and costs decrease, more advanced UAS will most likely become more prevalent in unrestricted commercial markets. UAS may be equipped with advanced features, such as high-quality real-time cameras, allowing the controller to illegally fly the aircraft beyond the line of sight unless the FAA certifies the operator. UAS activity over a venue may increase during special or significant events. The FAA may issue a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) that limits the use of an area of airspace to the movement of government VIPs or special events. The dimensions, timing, and level of restriction for each TFR vary. Government officials may request counter-UAS support from DHS and the FBI.

RESOURCES:

Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR) Events Fact Sheet: https://www.dhs.gov/publication/special-event-assessment-rating-sear-events-fact-sheet

DHS FEMA National Incident Management System: Intelligence/Investigations Function Guidance and Field Operations Guide: https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1382093786350-411d33add2602da9c867a4fbcc7ff20e/NIMS_Intel_Invest_Function_Guidance_FINAL.pdf

DOJ Office of Community Oriented Policing Services – Planning And Managing Security For Major Special Events: Guidelines for Law Enforcement: https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=482649

FAA Temporary Flight Restriction List: https://tfr.faa.gov/tfr2/list.html

Federal Geographic Data Committee – Find Geospatial Date & Services: https://www.fgdc.gov/dataandservices

Food and Drug Administration Suspicious Activity Awareness Guide: https://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/FoodDefense/UCM245306.pdf

DHS Active Shooter Preparedness Program: https://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness

DHS Office for Bombing Prevention (OBP) Counter-IED Resources Guide, March 2017: https://www.dhs.gov/publication/obp-counter-ied-resources-guide

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