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Planning for first aid and medical services at events

If you are running an event, you need to have the right level of first aid and medical services.

Who should read this guidance?

This guidance is for any PCBU (person conducting a business or undertaking) that organises events. It might also be useful for:

- PCBUs that own or manage venues where events are held
- PCBUs that provide first aid and health services for events.

There is existing WorkSafe guidance which may be useful alongside this guide.

- [Providing a health service for an event](#) – quick guide
- [Managing risk at events](#) – quick guide

PCBU duties

PCBUs have duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA).

PCBUs have a primary duty of care to ensure the health and safety of their workers so far as is reasonably practicable.

PCBUs must also look after people that could be put at risk by their work (that is, the event), so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes customers, visitors and the public.

Another duty PCBU's have is that they must make sure there is adequate first aid for their workers by:

- making sure there are enough workers trained to administer first aid, or
- making sure the workers have access to people who are trained to administer first aid.

Something to note

As a PCBU, your duty to provide first aid to workers does not automatically extend to visitors.

But you also have the duty to make sure that any event you organise is without risks to the health and safety of visitors, so far as is reasonably practicable.

If you organise an event you should consider whether it would be reasonably practicable to provide a health service at the event to minimise the risk of serious harm.

Planning to manage health risks

If you choose to provide medical services for events, plan early and involve your event health service provider at the beginning. Ensure everyone involved has all the information needed to decide what coverage is needed for your event.

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora's has event guidance to help you work out your risk assessment, health risk controls and emergency coordination with health services.

For more, see [Public health guidance for festival and event organisers](#)

Planning to provide medical cover

If you are providing medical services for events, they should be:

- staffed by qualified and capable workers who can treat the injuries and health problems that might happen
- coordinated with emergency response plans. For information on what information should be included in your area, check with your local council. Links to templates are provided as examples.

Event health service providers can help you identify what level of coverage is needed for your event, including:

- appropriate medical coverage for different size events
- expectations for first-aid capability
- organiser options (volunteer first aiders versus a contracted event medic)
- service standards including the clinical governance model.

For more information from Hato Hone St John, see [Event Health Services](#)

For more information from Wellington Free Ambulance, see [Event Medical Services](#)

For information on clinical standard of care for injury or management of illness, that First Aiders should follow, see [First aid and Resuscitation guidelines](#)

Working out what level of on-site medical cover you might need at an event – a two-step model

This is a sample tool to help you plan. It is only an example. Final cover should reflect your own documented risk assessment and any input and information you might get from your event medical service provider and local authorities.

1 Work out your relative risk

For each of the risk factors in the first column, look across the row and choose the option that applies to your event. Note the score and then add the scores together. In any risk factor, choose the highest level that applies.

RISK FACTORS	RELATIVE RISK SCORE				Risk Score
	0	1	2	3	
Attendance (peak)	< 500	500 to 5,000	5,001-20,000	More than 20,000	
Crowd dynamics	seated/low mobility	mixed/family	active/dense	mosh/rushing risk	
Alcohol/other drugs	none	licensed low-risk	licensed + high consumption history	festival-style/high usage expected	
Ambulance access/egress	excellent	good	difficult	very difficult/remote	
Event duration	≤ 4 hrs	4-10 hrs	> 10 hrs or multi-day		
Environment	indoor/controlled	outdoor mild	outdoor with heat/cold/wind		
Participant activity	sedentary	moderate	strenuous/competitive		
Anticipated audience clinical profile	general population	mixed incl vulnerable	large vulnerable cohorts		
Total					

Add +2 if your event (or similar New Zealand events) has a history of elevated medical incidents.

TABLE 1: Relative risk calculator for on-site medical cover at an event

2 Work out what medical cover you should consider

Use your total score to help you plan what minimum medical cover tier may look like at your event.

Note: Escalate or adjust upwards if there are specific hazards or risk factors.

TIER	SCORE	MINIMUM ONSITE MEDICAL COVER	NOTES/TRIGGERS
Tier 1: Low	0-3	- Named first-aid coordinator. - 1+ First Aider per 500 attendees. - Stocked first-aid post(s). - Radio/phone link to organiser and 111.	Suitable for small, low-risk gatherings. Keep a clear ambulance route. Escalate if the event is outdoor and weather risk rises.
Tier 2: Moderate	4-7	- First-aid team (2-4) across the site. - 1 Treatment Post with Automated External Defibrillator (AED). - Rovers during peak attendance times. - Agreed ambulance handover point.	Consider medical event service cover where alcohol/crowding present. See Health New Zealand guidance for heat/dehydration, crowded-space risks.
Tier 3: Elevated	8-11	- Professional event medics. - Clinical lead plus first responders. - 1-2 treatment posts plus roving teams. - Dedicated ambulance access/escort plan.	For larger/longer events or sites where access/egress is difficult. Confirm escalation and transfer-to-ambulance procedures.
Tier 4: High	12+	- Contracted medical provider with clinical governance. - Onsite treatment centre capability. - Liaison with local ED/urgent care. - Joint communications check with Police/Fire/Ambulance.	Large festivals or high-risk sport. Implement multi-agency emergency plan (see council templates and Health New Zealand guidance).

TABLE 2: Considerations for on-site medical cover

Control measures to put in place (for all tiers)

- First aid arrangements
 - named coordinator – ensure there is a single, known, point of contact who can coordinate first aid efforts and any escalation actions
 - staffed and signposted first-aid/treatment post(s) with adequately stocked kits
 - AED where crowds are greater than 500 people or response delays possible.
- Communications
 - radio network and 111 capability
 - agreed ambulance rendezvous/handover point
 - site map shared with provider and emergency services.
- Access/egress
 - keep emergency routes clear, your traffic plan should prioritise ambulance flow during times of peak attendance.
- Crowd care
 - provide drinking water, shade/warmth as needed
 - intoxication and drug management strategy
 - lost and found persons and family/child safety processes.
- Overlapping duties
 - coordinate with venue, security, stallholders, medical event providers, and others
 - agree who does what, when, and how to escalate.

Before, during, after – sample checklists

BEFORE

- Complete your risk assessment and choose a tier.
- Engage a suitable medical provider (for Tiers 3–4).
- Finalise Emergency Management Plan and First-aid/Health and Safety Plan; circulate site maps and contact lists.

DURING

- Brief teams (roles, radio channels, rendezvous point).
- Monitor heat/crowd/alcohol/drug risks; adjust resourcing for peak attendance.
- Log incidents and near-misses.

AFTER

- Debrief with your medical event provider and key PCBU's;
- Review incident data to inform what to improve next time.

Example: Two-day inner-city weekend street festival

This annual two-day street festival attracts approximately 100,000 people across a single inner-city suburb over one summer weekend.

- Multiple city blocks are closed to traffic and converted into pedestrian zones
- There are music stages, roving street performances, market and food stalls, pop-up installations
- There are multiple licensed premises and several permanent venues operating under temporary extensions to their alcohol licences (midday-midnight)
- The surrounding area includes residential apartments, bars, retail spaces, and dense footpaths, creating complex crowd-movement patterns.
- The suburb sits within minutes of a major hospital, police station, and fire service hub.
- Drug and alcohol use is common, though crowd behaviour in previous years has generally been positive.

Risk profile

The risks stem primarily from:

- Very high crowd volumes, alcohol consumption, hot summer conditions, densely packed streets, temporary structures, moving performers, food preparation areas, and multiple intersecting activities.
- Hazards include dehydration, slips and falls, intoxication-related injuries, burns from food stalls, heat stress, crowd crush points, and minor trauma from trip hazards or uneven road surfaces.
- Street closures create complex access issues for ambulances during peak times. Under HSWA, PCBUs involved in the event (council, venue operators, event management contractors, stallholder PCBUs, security providers, and health service providers) must work together to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of both workers and the large volume of visitors.

Although emergency services are close, congestion and street closures can significantly delay ambulance access, making onsite health capacity reasonably practicable to reduce the risk of serious harm.

The event organiser should plan for:

Given the scale, multi-venue layout, and moderate-to-high alcohol and drug use, a multi-site event health service is reasonably practicable. A model consistent with WorkSafe guidance may include:

- one Event Health Operations Lead (senior paramedic or RN with large-event experience) overseeing coordination across the suburb
- two Satellite Medical Posts positioned near major stages and high-volume pedestrian areas. (increase resources towards evening/night)
- one Paramedic or RN in charge of each medical post, with supporting staff
- 4-6 First Responders (NZQA Level 3 or equivalent) rotating across posts and foot patrols
- alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) monitoring/support personnel embedded in high-risk licensed areas or chill-out spaces.

This staffing level ensures timely response despite congestion and enables early intervention to prevent escalation of medical issues.

Where to go for more information and templates

Health New Zealand

[Public health guidance for festival and event organisers](#)

ANZCOR/NZ Resuscitation Council

[First aid and Resuscitation guidelines](#)

Dunedin City Council

[Health and safety at events](#)

New Plymouth District Council

[Event Health and Safety Guidelines](#)