



Emergency Operations Considerations for Athletic Directors

Emergency operations are a critical aspect of an athletic director's responsibilities. When emergencies arise, the ability to respond swiftly and effectively can ensure the safety of athletes, coaches, and spectators. Below are key considerations for athletic directors when preparing for emergency situations:

1. Risk Assessment and Emergency Planning

- **Identify potential risks:** Athletic directors should assess the possible risks specific to their athletic programs, including injuries, weather-related incidents, medical emergencies, threats made to others, suicide attempt/ideation or even crowd-related issues.
- **Develop a comprehensive emergency plan:** Plans should cover different types of emergencies (e.g., weather, medical, natural disasters, violence, etc.). These plans should include immediate response procedures, evacuation routes, and communication strategies.
- **Coordination with local authorities:** Athletic directors should coordinate with local emergency services (e.g., fire departments, emergency medical, emergency management, and law enforcement) to ensure their response protocols align.

2. Staff Training and Responsibilities

- **CPR and First Aid Training:** Ensure that coaches, athletic trainers, and other staff are certified in CPR and first aid. They should know how to handle injuries, including severe trauma, cardiac arrest, or other medical emergencies.
- **Designate emergency roles:** Assign clear roles and responsibilities to staff during an emergency (e.g., someone in charge of contacting emergency responders, someone managing crowd control, someone monitoring athlete safety, etc.).
- **Regular drills:** Conduct emergency drills with staff, athletes, and volunteers. This could include fire drills, evacuations for weather-related events, or dealing with mass casualty incidents.

3. Communication

- **Internal communication systems:** Establish reliable communication systems for staff, coaches, athletes, and emergency responders. Consider two-way radios, mass text messaging systems, or mobile apps to relay information quickly.
- **Notification to parents and guardians:** Develop a plan for notifying parents/guardians in the event of an emergency, including which contact information will be used and how to keep them updated.
- **Public address systems:** Ensure that announcements can be made clearly and heard by all attendees in the event of an emergency.

4. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

- **On-site medical staff:** Ensure that qualified medical personnel (athletic trainers, doctors, or paramedics) are on hand for high-risk activities and games.
- **Equipment readiness:** Have medical equipment available, including AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators), first aid kits, and stretchers, readily accessible at the venue.
- **Athlete medical history:** Maintain up-to-date medical information on athletes, including allergies, pre-existing conditions, and emergency contacts.

5. Weather-related Emergencies

- **Monitor weather conditions:** Athletic directors should stay informed about weather forecasts, especially for outdoor sports. Severe conditions like lightning, storms, or extreme temperatures can pose serious risks.
- **Weather delay and cancellation protocols:** Have established protocols for suspending or canceling games, including a designated decision-maker and timelines for action.
- **Lightning safety:** Ensure that lightning safety guidelines are clear, and a shelter plan is in place. Follow established rules (e.g., 30-minute rule) for lightning safety during events.

6. Crowd Control and Evacuation

- **Crowd management procedures:** Athletic directors should develop procedures for crowd control in case of disturbances or emergencies. This includes having security personnel on-site, barriers, and clear evacuation routes.
- **Evacuation routes:** Ensure there are multiple exit points and evacuation plans that all staff, athletes, and attendees are familiar with in case of fire, severe weather, or any large-scale emergency.

- **Special consideration for vulnerable groups:** Consider the needs of individuals with disabilities, the elderly, or young children in the evacuation plan.

7. Post-Emergency Response

- **Debrief and review:** After an emergency, debrief with all involved parties to review the response. What went well? What could be improved? This feedback helps refine emergency plans for future incidents.
- **Emotional support:** Acknowledge that emergencies can cause psychological distress. Provide counseling or support for athletes, staff, and spectators affected by the event.
- **Follow-up care:** For serious injuries or trauma, ensure that affected individuals receive the necessary medical follow-up and support.

8. Compliance with Regulations

- **Stay compliant with laws:** Ensure all emergency plans comply with local regulations, including OSHA guidelines for safety in athletic facilities, ADA compliance for accessible emergency exits, and concussion protocols.
- **Insurance and liability considerations:** Ensure that the school or athletic program has appropriate insurance to cover injuries, damages, or lawsuits arising from emergencies.

9. Technology and Data

- **Use of technology:** Implement technologies like mass notification systems, mobile apps, or wearable devices to monitor athlete health and provide real-time updates in emergencies.
- **Data and documentation:** Keep detailed records of emergency events, including the actions taken, any injuries sustained, and post-event follow-up.

By focusing on these considerations, athletic directors can ensure they are well-prepared to respond to a variety of emergencies, providing a safe environment for athletes, staff, and spectators.