Minimizing Risk Through the Development of a Best Practice Framework for Tailgating Events

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Tailgating has evolved from a simple gathering of people prior to an event to an international phenomenon in recent years as event organizers of a variety of indoor and outdoor events have embraced and adapted this ritual to fit their specific needs and desires (Cahn, 2003; James, Breezeel, & Ross, 2001). While most often tailgating is a safe and enjoyable way for the fans to enjoy an added value to a live event, it is important that event organizers recognize their degree of responsibility and accountability hosting or promoting such events (Gillentine & Miller, 2006). Although a court ruling established an expected standard of care in regards to protecting patrons in tailgating activities (Bearman v. University of Notre Dame, 1983), additional research indicated that more than half of Football Bowl Series (FBS) intercollegiate athletic programs did not possess risk management strategies specific to tailgating (Miller & Gillentine, 2006). As event environments have become more financially and legally complex, the need for a systematic methodology for conducting events has become more apparent (O'Toole, 2000). The current system of patchwork risk management methodologies leaves the event sport managers in a vulnerable position in terms of potential litigation (Gillentine & Miller, 2006). A method that may be employed to guard against such vulnerabilities is the use of a best practices model (O'Toole, 2000). A key strategy in implementing a best practice model is to balance the uniqueness of an organization with practices it has in common with other similar organizations (Becker, 2006). For use in sport event management it is important that the best practice model reflects all aspects of organizational business strategies of planning and control, including tailgating. An approach that is intended to align risk management with business strategy and operations is enterprise risk management (Young & Tippins, 2000).

Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) develops a comprehensive organizational policy for managing risks, embeds a process for the ongoing assessment of risks, and ultimately implements a process for the day-to-day management of those risks (Young & Tippins, 2000). The key characteristics of ERM are (a) top management engagement in the establishment of risk policy, and (b) the involvement of all employees in the management of risks that fall within the scope of their general responsibilities (Andersen & Schröder, 2010). Broadly, ERM approaches risks as a highly interconnected portfolio of risks that need to be managed, not just in response to the individual characteristics of a particular risk, but with a specific eye on understanding the interrelationships of all risks in question (Andersen & Schröder, 2010). The development of such a best practice model will provide event sport managers with a thorough system of accountability in regard to the actual management of such activities. Within the context of this presentation, using a best practices model will provide reasons to shift towards more strategic risk management practices as well as a value adding role for organization, which by definition includes a consideration of risk, for intercollegiate sport event administrators. Continued analysis of tailgating risk management practices over the past five years, coupled with feedback received from by sport event administrators revealed a consistent group of concerns It is with these concerns in mind that the authors recommend 12 components for developing a best practices model for hosting tailgating events. The purpose of this presentation will be to recommend a best practice model, by integrating ERM, which can be adapted to address the 12 risk concerns expressed by the intercollegiate sport event administrators. Without this understanding, the near perfect opportunity for promotion may become a near perfect opportunity for litigation.