

## Security Procedures Change With the Times

By *Judith Rubin*

Since September 11, there has been a new emphasis on security at entertainment venues. Comparable situations in the past can offer some useful parallels.

Security at the Olympics, for instance, has been a front-burner issue for decades. The tragedy of Munich '72-when members of the Black September Palestinian terrorist group infiltrated the Olympic Village, kidnapping and murdering 11 Israeli athletes-forever changed the face of security at the Olympic Games.

Atlanta, Ga., thought it had covered all the security bases for the 1996 Olympics. Yet, a pipe-bomb exploded in Centennial Park during the Games, killing one person and leading to an immediate overhaul of security procedures.

Just a few weeks ago, in early February, the 2002 Winter Olympic Games were held in Salt Lake City, Utah. "Even before September 11, security for Salt Lake was a major focus," said journalist Gary Smart in a December 29, 2001, article for *The Advertiser*, an Australian paper. "Initially the U.S. government allocated \$200 million, with the state of Utah and Salt Lake City Olympic Committee contributing another \$70 million. But the events of September 11 saw the government tip in another \$40 million, taking the total to \$310 million, establishing the Salt Lake Games as the most protected sporting event in history."

In December 23, 2001, *Washington Post*, writer Amy Shipley noted, "At the 2002 Winter Games, Secret Service agents will patrol on skies and in snow-mobiles. Ticket holders will attend events in venues surrounded by 10-foot razor-wire fences, monitored by motion detectors, manned by rifle-carrying National Guardsman, and entered through metal detectors. They will occasionally notice the skies above Salt Lake City cleared by all air traffic-except for patrolling fighter jets. Perhaps the biggest change is a fundamental one: The Olympic Games, designated in 1998 as a National Special Security Event, are the first to fall under the jurisdiction of the Secret Service, the FBI, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency."

If tragedy strikes in or near an entertainment facility or event-whether it is a natural disaster, an accident, an infrastructure breakdown, or an act of terror-the strength of the organization and its ability to cope will receive their most severe test and scrutiny. Should the unthinkable occur, management and staff have to have thought about it, prepared for it, and practiced for it.

The day after the bombing in Atlanta was the first day on the job for William H. Avery III at Coca-Cola's Olympic City. He had been brought in by K & K Insurance to provide loss control services to the multilayered public attraction. Because the bomb, Avery's job responsibilities changed instantly. "We had gone beyond 'How to Handle a Bomb Threat' to a real situation of imminent danger. From then on, 80 percent of our focus was on

bomber terrorist activities. We turned to inspecting everyone and everything. Before reopening, the entire facility, from roof to floor, was reinspected at least three times, including the perimeter fence. All cars were getting mirror checks underneath. Everyone was checked, no exceptions, from the employees to the president of Coca-Cola. Even I was checked. Even the inspectors were checked. For a program to be 100 percent effective, no one can be exempted because of status."

Avery began his career in 1976 as safety manager for Busch Gardens in Tampa, Fla., eventually taking on corporate safety responsibilities for Busch Entertainment Corp. Other positions include VP of safety, security, rides and general maintenance at Boardwalk & Baseball. His experience at Atlanta '96 prompted him to write the book *Emergency Disaster Guidelines and Procedures for the Sports, Leisure and Entertainment Industry*, just coming out in its second edition and self-published by Avery Safety Consulting, Orlando, Fla. The new edition devotes a chapter to security issues and terrorism, a topic on which Avery gave a presentation at IAAPA 2001, as a panel session on theme park development. Other chapters of the book cover preparedness for such possibilities as an aircraft accident, amusement ride accident, animal escape, blizzard, earthquake, flood, hurricane, tornado, and a train accident.

Avery explains that from the perspective of forming a practical response, if a facility has discussed, practiced and planned for a catastrophe, it has also prepared for terrorism. "When humankind is attacked intentionally, there's a fundamental difference," he says, "but look at the result: damage and injuries. In that respect, it's the same as if you are dealing with a large explosion or if your property ran near a major rail carrier and a derailment exposed people to hazardous material. You go into rescue mode, and you need to have the answer to the question, 'So what do I do now?'"

Whether or not management and staff know the answer to that question before-hand will make all the difference in how well they handle the situation and how their actions are judged later. "You need to have your resources at hand," says Avery. He recommends preparing a methodical emergency contact list, based on an assessment of possible hazards and circumstances, and keeping it up to date. "Without communications, you don't have a plan."

Avery stresses that once a catastrophe has occurred, there's no way to avoid a major disruption. "The bomb went off across the street from us. We found nail fragments behind some of our tents. We had employees who wanted to leave or needed counseling. And this is just what happened to Coca-Cola City. It was going on to a greater degree within the Olympics complex itself. All the employees were told what was going on and why, and we laid out the new ground rules. We told them, 'We're upset too.' You have to hit it face on and be open and honest, tell people the truth. That way you don't get a lot of rumors going around."

How do you budget for a major disruption? You don't, according to Avery. "You can't just add an extra \$450,000 year after year," he says. "You just absorb it and do what you have to do. You absorb it, knowing that, at some level, you're going to go on."