

Spring 2015

# SECURITY DIRECTOR

ASIS International/New York City Chapter

**PERSON OF  
THE YEAR**

**BILL BRATTON**  
POLICE COMMISSIONER  
NEW YORK CITY



# Event Planning— Wine, Food, VIPs and ...Security

**Bernard Toliver, CMP**

*New Year's Eve NYC—below freezing in the streets as the Waterford Glass Ball 'Drops' in Times Square—And ringing in 2015, I had the great pleasure of watching it from the warmth and comfort of a mid-town hotel suite surrounded by other happy revelers...*

For more than twenty years I have been an event planner, and learned through some surprising experiences that we cannot ignore the security side of events. New Year's Eve in Times Square is no exception.

We expect a full security perspective each year as New York City welcomes more than one-million visitors from around the world to witness the 'Ball Drop'. There's music, entertainment, colorful confetti, fireworks and lots and lots of security. Many streets are closed to traffic except for emergency vehicles; subway trains skip stations with access to Times Square and some subway entrances are closed altogether until after midnight.

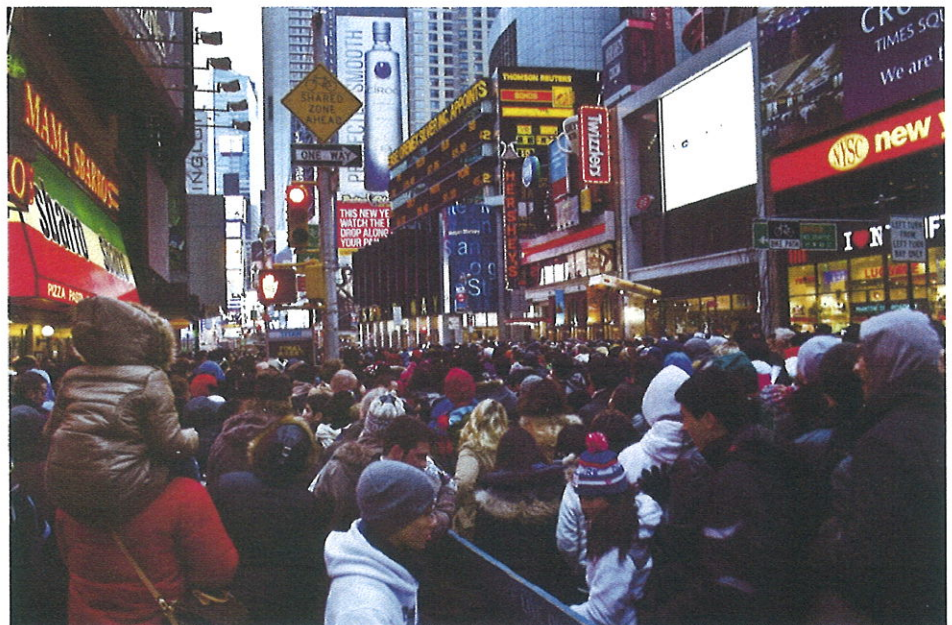
As an event planner I've always had focus on the "logistics"—contract negotiations, food and beverage deliveries/displays, audio-visual requirements, so on. Emergency procedures were always on the list. However general security concerns involved making sure laptop computers didn't sprout legs and walk off-property. But first-hand experience was a great teacher as things changed dramatically: Some years ago I had a crasher at one

of my events—no press credentials, no badge, no anything. Luckily, the event team and I discovered this and had the individual removed from the room before the program started. We were lucky. This is when I began to look at event security differently. Today, I am more interested in process and procedures than counting on luck.

Discussions about emergency management and security are not always easy to have, but they are important discussions. In a post-9/11 world, the landscape

program at a local university. Whenever I take students to a hotel for a site visit, I have the hotel's Director of Security speak to my class, giving them an overview of how the Hotel's security team works with meeting and event organizers in a 21st Century environment. It's an important discussion involving everything from emergency procedures (911, Fire, Medical) to security and loss prevention and back-up generators.

Not only is it important for students to bring it all into their



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for meeting and event security, emergency procedures, risk management, everything, has changed. With cyber-attacks, fraudulent credit cards, and stolen identities seemingly a part of everyday life, we have to question more and test our systems on multiple fronts. Depending upon the event type, length, audience, and particulars, I seek guidance and assistance from a variety of experts.

In addition to leading my own event management firm, I am part of the faculty in the hospitality

SOP, but I go over this type of procedure review for every event I manage. As event professionals we are not 'first responders' nor security experts. However, in the event of an emergency or security-related issue, often security is our first point of contact. We ask: "what if" long before the event begins and then are better able to work with the facility and security staff to provide a safe environment for all involved.

Here are a few tips I've picked up along the way:

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### 1) Develop a Group Profile –

Provide the security team with a group profile. During your initial meeting ask questions about emergency procedures and general security procedures. Inform the security director/manager about the particular audience, who is

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coming to event and why they are attending. Will there be VIPs, celebrities, elected officials? Will they provide their own security? Make sure that the facility's security leadership has the contact information so they can develop a coordination plan for how these individuals and all attendees will enter and exit the facility. If you are working with an organization or group that often receives threats/warnings based on their profile, make the security team aware in advance.

**2) Communication** – I'm talking "information" not radios. Share information on a 'need to know' basis. Give volunteers and vendors enough information for them to perform their tasks, but unless management provides them with written approval, these individuals do not get access to confidential documents or proprietary informa-

tion. In most cases, even the event organizer doesn't require that level of detail.

### 3) Emergency Procedures –

Preparedness and security are not mutually exclusive. Event organizers also need to have a plan for emergencies that they develop in conjunction with the hotel or facility; the plan will be similar but differ from location to location; for example, understanding that response times in rural areas will differ from response times in metropolitan areas.

**4) Control Access** – A badge doesn't mean "all access" unless it's stamped all access. And today, you can copy or forge most badges. So the right security team can provide significant value. Ideally, have them set up several check points to review credentials and control access to your event (this should also include re-entry). If possible, have the vetting process take place in the Lobby, on a lower floor, or designated area outside the event itself. If necessary, have a member of your team at each access point to assist security. New Year's Eve in Times Square was a great example. You were not going very far without proper credentials for many areas of Times Square had been "frozen" by NYPD.

**5) Screening** – Depending upon the event type, event organizers might want to invest in body scanners or at minimum badges with photo ID, or computer chips that can be scanned at different access points.

**6) Clean Sweep** – My version of a clean sweep differs from a security expert's version. Whenever I produce a meeting and a session ends, I go to each meeting room and remove all papers including pads from the flip chart stands

(where impressions below the written sheets can be as good as the original "confidential" data), and I collect any note pads from the tables. This reduces chances for important or proprietary information unknowingly and unwillingly being passed along to a competitor.

There are many many more issues to consider and for that I'm grateful that we have security experts at the ready.

Back to midtown... and early in the evening on December 31... check points were closer together and increased in numbers as I got near Times Square. Each required the same credentials to get me to the next access point. As I made my way through the final one at the hotel and entered the elevator, I was reminded of each layer of security that I'd passed through and was happy they were in place.

Security... embrace it!

If invited, I am looking forward to repeating the entire process when ushering in 2016.

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## **SAFER SCHOOLS FOR TODAY**

**By Robert Donnelly**

I went to a 100-year old red brick school over 50 years ago. No guards at the doors and windows you could walk through. There

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