

**THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
SPECTATOR SPORTS SAFETY AND SECURITY (NCS⁴)
AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI (USM)**

NCS⁴TM



**2025
INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS SAFETY AND SECURITY
SURVEY**

NCS⁴



Copyright 2025 The University of Southern Mississippi

2025 Intercollegiate Athletics Safety and Security Survey

The purpose of this survey was to explore safety and security operations and concerns at intercollegiate sporting events. The survey consisted of 33 questions covering demographics, staffing and operations, safety and security concerns, and technology utilization. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Southern Mississippi approved this project before the collection of data. The online survey was administered at the NCS⁴ National Intercollegiate Athletics Safety and Security Forum at Duke University in Durham, NC, on Jan 28-29, 2025. A follow-up email was sent to forum participants after the event ended as a reminder to complete the anonymous voluntary survey. A total of 38 respondents completed the survey.

Demographics

Participants included personnel working in all facets of intercollegiate athletic events, including campus law enforcement, facilities operations, assistant/associate athletic director, emergency manager, local/state law enforcement, event manager, and game operations. The majority of participants have over 10 years of experience (63%), and most work at a public institution (76%). The on-campus student body population ranged from less than 5,000 to over 60,000. Participants reported the largest crowd in which they typically prepare for a season ranging from less than 10,000 (11%) to more than 80,000 (30%). Over half of respondents (65%) prepare for events with crowds of 50,000 or more.

Staffing and Operations

Most venues (87%) have experienced staff shortages within the last two years. However, 92% of venues have taken action to mitigate these shortages. The most common mitigation techniques include increased hourly wage, complimentary food, aggressive recruitment, use of multiple third-party contracted staff, enhanced employee recognition, raffles, and bonuses. Other techniques include discounted tickets, close parking, complimentary merchandise, adding technology to decrease staffing needs, and offering family events for staff at the venue. Other suggestions included recognition for perfect attendance and payment of student fees for student employees.

Table 1 depicts the top training requirements for event staff. The most common training includes venue/event familiarization, standard operational procedures, prohibited items, and crowd management. The least required training consists of cyber readiness, gambling policy, and drone intrusion.

Participants utilize various training methods such as tabletop exercises, seminars, functional exercises, workshops, drills, red-teaming, full-scale exercises, and game simulations. Additionally, over half of the respondents provide specific training for screening patrons with functional needs. Most respondents conduct event-specific risk assessments (74%).

Table 1*Required Training for Event Staff*

Types of Training	Percentage
Venue/event familiarization	84%
Standard operational procedures	82%
Prohibited items	74%
Crowd management	66%
Guest services	55%
On-field intrusions/emergencies	55%
De-escalation/conflict resolution	55%
Evacuations and sheltering	53%
Fan code of conduct	50%
Security awareness and techniques	45%

Table 2 highlights the venue policies and procedures in place for emergencies. Evacuation procedures and prohibited items were the most common, with drug policies and crisis management plans being the least common. Nearly all (95%) consider access and functional needs in evacuation procedures.

Table 2*Venue Policies and Procedures*

Policies/Procedures	Percentage
Evacuation procedure	100%
Prohibited items	100%
Severe weather policy	97%
Emergency medical response	95%
Fan code of conduct	95%
Alcohol policy	92%
Ejection policy	89%
Active shooter response	87%
Incident reporting procedure	84%
Crisis management plan	76%
Drug policy	58%

Safety and Security Concerns

Participants were asked to what degree they were concerned about specific threats and risks, with 1=least concerned and 5=extremely concerned. Table 3 highlights the safety and security concerns of intercollegiate professionals when managing or organizing an event. Vehicle ramming is of the highest concern (M=3.97), followed by weapons (M=3.79), alcohol abuse

(M=3.74), active shooter (M=3.68), and tailgating incidents (M=3.55). Participants were least concerned with infectious disease, food-borne illness, vandalism, drug abuse, and mass transit security.

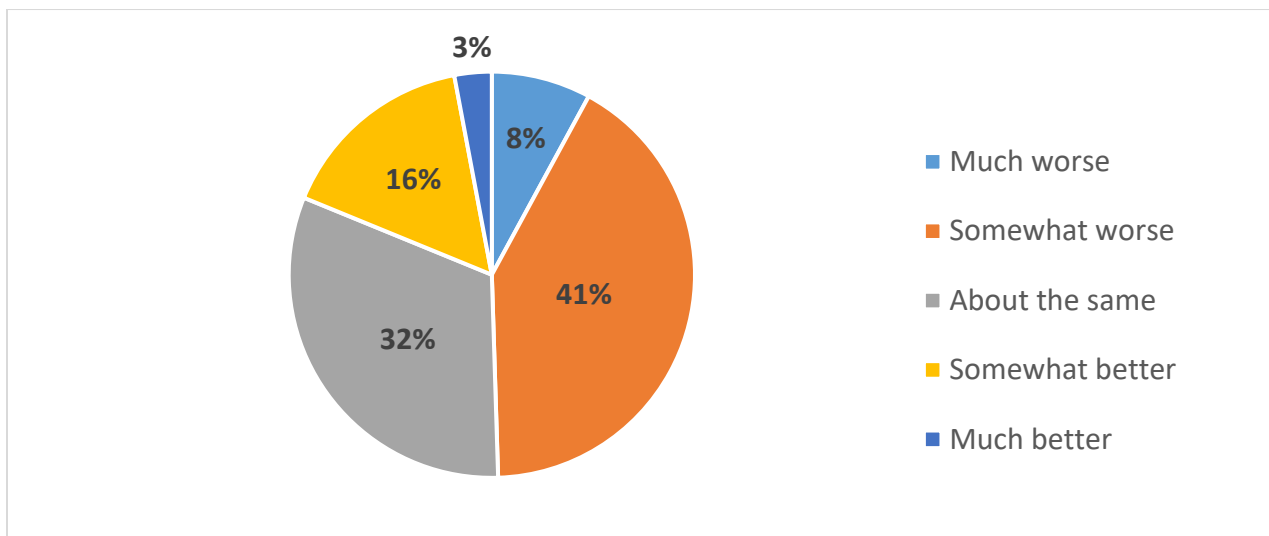
Table 3

Safety and Security Concerns

Type of Threat	Mean	SD
Vehicle Ramming	3.97	1.16
Weapons	3.79	1.03
Active Shooter	3.74	1.07
Alcohol Abuse	3.68	0.95
Tailgating Incidents	3.55	1.04
Improvised Explosive Device (IED)	3.50	1.14
Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED)	3.45	1.21
Crowd Crush	3.43	0.86
Fan Violence	3.26	0.99
Terror Attacks	3.21	0.98
On-Field Intrusions	3.21	0.89
Inclement Weather	3.21	1.00
Entry or Exit Panic	3.11	0.82
Appropriate Onsite Medical Services	3.08	1.00
Unauthorized Drones	3.08	1.13
Parking Incidents	3.03	1.13
Assault and Battery	2.92	0.88
Chemical/Biological/Radiological/Nuclear Explosions (CBRN)	2.92	1.22
Natural Disasters	2.89	1.01
Cyber Attacks	2.82	0.82
Suicide Bomber	2.73	1.22
Kidnapping/Abduction	2.46	1.11
Theft	2.34	0.93
Neighborhood Safety	2.28	1.07
Human Trafficking	2.24	1.05
Mass Transit Security	2.16	1.10
Drug Abuse	2.05	0.86
Vandalism	2.00	0.93
Food-Borne Illness	1.84	0.72
Infectious Disease	1.81	0.70

Participants were also asked about their perceptions of fan behavior, with 82% indicating that fan behavior is about the same or worse than 5 years ago (see Figure 1). Most inappropriate fan behavior incidents occur inside the venue (68%), with the most common forms of inappropriate fan behavior including alcohol abuse (87%), abusive/threatening language (68%), fights between patrons (53%), throwing objects on the field of play (42%), smoking/vaping (39%), rushing the playing area (26%), and property damage (18%). Consequences for inappropriate fan behavior included immediate ejections, arrest/prosecution, loss of ticket-buying privileges, expulsion from future games, fines, and mandatory training.

Figure 1. Fan behavior today compared to 5 years ago



Only 5% of respondents experienced an increase in drug-related incidents at their sporting events; however, 24% have had an overdose incident at one of their events. The majority of event staff (55%) have not received training to identify potential overdoses, and only 11% are partnering with non-profit organizations to provide overdose awareness and education to spectators.

Crowd management strategies include the use of barriers (100%), signage (97%), public address announcements (89%), event staff directing crowds (84%), alcohol policy (71%), designated gate entry (58%), and staggered entry times (13%). The least used crowd management strategies include turnstiles and tethered drones.

Most respondents (84%) use industry research and data to inform safety and security policies and operations.

Technology Solutions

Table 4 presents the top 15 technologies and analytical tools used at intercollegiate venues. The most common tools include surveillance cameras, two-way radios, social media messaging, mobile/cellular communications, public address (PA) systems, and walk-through magnetometers. Technologies used the least include simulation software, robots, X-ray scanners, facial recognition systems, facial validation/authentication, and turnstiles.

Table 4

Technologies and analytical tools used at venues

Technology/analytical tools	Percentage
Surveillance cameras	100%
Two-way radios	89%
Social media messaging	87%
Mobile/cellular communications	87%
Public address system	87%
Walk-through magnetometer	87%
Online ticketing platforms	84%
Access control & credentialing	84%
Mass notification system	82%
Mobile ticketing apps	82%
Handheld magnetometer	82%
Digital signage for safety and security messaging	79%
Weather detection and warning system	76%
Stationary bollards	68%
Removable barricade (t-style, d-style, other)	66%

Most respondents (76%) stated that artificial intelligence is not being implemented in security screening, surveillance, or incident response efforts. The majority of participants (63%) do not fully understand how artificial intelligence can assist them in their security efforts. Nearly 80% of respondents have observed and detected unauthorized drones above or near their venue's airspace, with at least 10% of these drones interrupting operations/events.

Resources

Safety and security resources for the intercollegiate athletic event industry include:

- ASIS
 - [Security Publications and Resources](#)
- DHS/Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)
 - [Active Assailant/Shooter Emergency Action Plan Product Suite](#)
 - [Active Shooter Preparedness](#)
 - [Bombing Prevention](#)
 - [Cyber Essentials](#)
 - [De-Escalation Series](#)
 - [Emergency Services Sector-Specific Tabletop Exercise Program](#)
 - [“If You See Something, Say Something” Campaign](#)
 - [Insider Threat Mitigation](#)
 - [Mass Gathering Security Planning Tool](#)
 - [Non-Confrontational Techniques](#)
 - [Patron Screening Best Practices Guide](#)
 - [Protecting Against the Threat of Unmanned Aircraft Systems \(UAS\)](#)
 - [Public Venue Bag Search Procedures Guide](#)
 - [Public Venue Credentialing Guide](#)
 - [Public Venue Screening Guide and Touchless Screening Annex](#)
 - [Security <https://www.cisa.gov/about/regions/security-advisors>Advisors](https://www.cisa.gov/about/regions/security-advisors)
 - [Security of Soft Targets and Crowded Places-Resource Guide](#)
 - [Vehicle Ramming Attack Mitigation](#)
- Event Safety Alliance (ESA)
 - [ANSI ES1.40 – 2023 Event Safety – Event Security](#)
 - [ANSI ES1.7 – 2021 Event Safety – Weather Preparedness](#)
 - [ANSI ES1.9 – 2020 Crowd Management](#)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
 - [Active Shooter Resources](#)
- International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM)
 - [Safety and Security Resources](#)
- National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS⁴)
 - [Training and Resources](#)
 - [Security and Risk Assessment for Facility and Event Managers](#)
- Security Industry Association (SIA)
 - [Training and Technology Resources](#)
- United States Secret Service
 - [National Threat Assessment Center](#)

Contact

For further information or additional questions, please contact:

Dr. Brandon Allen
NCS⁴ Director of Research
Associate Professor of Sport Management
Email: Brandon.L.Allen@usm.edu

Dr. Stacey A. Hall
NCS⁴ Executive Director
Professor of Sport Management
Email: Stacey.A.Hall@usm.edu