



Safety in Large Crowds

How to Maintain Personal Safety in Large Groups

What is the Problem?

Crowd safety is the ability to manage the crowd effectively, and prevent an unmanageable mass over which control is lost.¹ Reaching critical crowd density is a main characteristic of crowd disaster and is approached when the floor space per (standing) person is reduced to about 1.5 square feet or less.² At 5 sq ft per person, the maximum capacity of a corridor or walkway is attained, (i.e. exiting a stadium or theatre); at approximately 3 sq ft per person, involuntary contact and brushing against others occurs.³ This is a behavioral threshold generally avoided by the public, except in crowded elevators and buses.⁴ Below 2 sq ft per person, potentially dangerous crowd forces and psychological pressures begin to develop.⁵



Who is at Risk?

Anyone can be at risk in a crowd that is large enough to reach a dangerous density. However, liquor and drugs can exacerbate unruly behavior in a crowd, putting individuals more at risk for injury.⁶

Prevention Tips

Getting caught in a crowd can offer challenges, but preventing danger or theft are key. Keep yourself and your family safe by following these safety tips:

- Carry purses, portfolios and briefcases in a manner that will allow you to let go.⁷
- Increase awareness in places you are already very comfortable to stay fresh.⁸
- Park in well-lit areas to discourage personal attack and a stolen vehicle.⁹
- Close and lock your doors and remove all valuables.¹⁰
- Walk in well-lit and populated areas¹¹
- Wear closed toe shoes, not flip-flops or sandals, to protect your feet.¹²
- Notify local security immediately, if you become separated from your child.¹³



Plan of the Week (POW):

When planning to attend a crowded event **ALWAYS** prepare your schedule with safety in mind.¹⁴ The combined pressure of massed pedestrians and shock-wave effects that run through crowds at critical density levels produce forces which are impossible for individuals, even small groups of individuals, to resist.¹⁵ Once breaking away from large crowds, if you suspect you are being followed, stay away from deserted areas and head towards people or to the nearest open store.¹⁶

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NMCPHC Injury Prevention and Violence Free Living Webpage

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcpHC/health-promotion/injury-violence-free-living/Pages/injury-violence-free-living.aspx>

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