**Emergency Preparation Guidance for McMaster Event Planning**

If you are involved in planning an event, it is important to familiarize yourself with the [Freedom of Expression](https://president.mcmaster.ca/freedom-of-expression/) policy framework, polices and statements, including the document on [Freedom of Expression, Protest, and Dissent: Guidance for Event Organizers and Participants](https://president.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/09/Guidance-for-Event-Organizers_FINAL_8Jun18.pdf).

It is important that employees working at an event are familiar with appropriate emergency procedures.

* **Develop a Plan:** Prior to the event, you should develop an emergency plan that includes relevant emergency contact information and emergency exit instructions. Provide employees working at the event with a copy of the emergency plan and a comprehensive list of everyone’s roles. This will ensure that they know who to turn to with questions and what the procedure is in certain circumstances.
* **Building Layout:**All employees should be familiar with the building layout and have a basic knowledge of the surrounding area. While it is important that some have a more thorough knowledge, every employee should know the basics. For example:
  + Fire exits and exit routes
  + Doors or other items that need to be closed for protection from wind, fire, etc.
  + Underground, secure exits in case it is necessary to move people quickly
* **Communication:** A reliable means of communication is a must for all employees. Key employees should consider having cell phones or radios. Some locations may also have a campus landline. If cell phones are a means of communication, make sure there is a strong cell signal within the venue. Employees working at the event should also be aware of where to find information on university communication channels such as the Daily News, social media, etc.
* **Emergency Numbers and Script:** The first individual to identify an emergency should immediately call for help. Ensure employees are instructed on when to call and what to say. Provide a list of information to supply to emergency responders for the highest efficiency.

**Attendees**

No matter how thorough your emergency plan is, it is severely lacking if it does not contain a plan of communication with attendees. Consider the following:

* Provide attendees with emergency contact numbers and evacuation plans where possible. This could be included as part of communications prior to the event.
* Advise attendees to contact organizers prior to the event if they require special accommodations (mobility issues, etc.).
* Provide main contact numbers and McMaster’s Security Services number for emergencies dialed from a cell phone.
* Have a pre-prepared communication plan to the audience in the event of an emergency.

**Monitor Increasing Risk**

As the event draws near, keep an eye on the circumstances surrounding your event. Consult with internal resources such as McMaster Security Services, University Health and Safety, Faculty of Health Sciences Safety Office, etc. regarding any brewing social unrest, major storms, natural disasters, or construction at or around your venue.

* Write out clear criteria and protocol for canceling. Some circumstances may warrant a slight change of plans, while others may cause the entire event to be canceled or postponed. For example, severe weather may cause outdoor activities to be canceled and replaced with indoor options. Severe snowstorms may be a cause for canceling the event entirely if a decision is made to close the University.

**Creating an Inclusive and Psychologically Safe Environment:**

**Engagement Guidelines for Presenters**

With a view to creating an inclusive space for discussion, supportive of belonging and psychological safety, the following is a list of directions that may be helpful to socialize in your classroom/event space. This material is modified from Dr. Kathy Obear’s Engagement Guidelines[[1]](#footnote-1).

1. Open and honest communication
2. Participate fully; be brave; engage; expect and lean into discomfort if learning
3. Listen respectfully; listen to learn
4. Seek to understand; expect disagreement & listen harder (assume good intentions)
5. Share airtime: move in, move out
6. Be as present as you have capacity for
7. Be open to new perspectives
8. Explore impact; acknowledge intent
9. Speak from personal experience (don’t generalize!)
10. Respect and maintain confidentiality
11. Recognize your triggers; share if you feel triggered
12. Trust that dialogue will take us to deeper levels of understanding and acceptance
13. Engage and embrace this opportunity; we won’t be finished!

For further guidance or assistance, please contact:

**Human Resources** [hr.mcmaster@mcmaster.ca](mailto:hr.mcmaster@mcmaster.ca)

1. [Home - Dr. Kathy Obear (drkathyobear.com)](https://drkathyobear.com/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)