

Ann Arbor Emergency Operations Team NEWSLETTER

EDITION 2

June 2026



A Message from the Emergency Manager

TWO CHAMPIONSHIPS. TWO TORNADOES.

Spring 2026 was historic for the City of Ann Arbor. On April 6, The University of Michigan men's basketball team won their second NCAA National Championship in program history, following its first in 1989, resulting in a spontaneous gathering and significant fire activity. Just nine days later, on April 15, an EF-1 tornado impacted the city. This was only the second tornado on record in A2's modern-day history, preceded by another EF-1 tornado that touched down on Easter Sunday in 1988.

As I reflect on these events, I am reminded that moments of celebration and achievement often exist alongside challenge and unpredictability. At times, we must prepare for the unknown and the unexpected, and we learn that even the best plans, with the best intentions, may fall short. The reality is, having a plan is only one part of the equation. The other critical piece is the people. I'd like to recognize all of the first responders, including firefighters, police officers, public works staff, the team at Vets, our damage assessment team, and our EOC team who responded and supported these incidents.

Our work here isn't over. In emergency management, each response feeds back into the planning cycle. We will leverage these historical events to document lessons learned and develop a plan for applying those lessons. While we cannot predict when or what, we can continue to enhance our preparedness and readiness for what is known – a next one.

EM UPDATES

Special Events: Safety & Security Planning

This year has presented a significant volume of special events requiring public safety coordination and planning. These include both city-permitted events and large spontaneous gatherings, such as No Kings Day 3.0 and the U-M men's basketball national championship celebration and parade. Looking ahead, our focus now turns to two of the summer's largest events: the Ann Arbor Art Fair and the first-ever summer concerts at Michigan Stadium.

What we have learned so far:

1. Special events are a defining characteristic of Ann Arbor and the diversity of events experienced this year highlight the need for dedicated planning, coordination, and resource allocation.
2. Our physical EOC has created new opportunities for coordination and readiness.
3. We need to develop a formal and standardized way we assess risk for special events and let the risk help define what planning, coordination, and resources are needed.
4. Partnerships and pre-planning meetings are essential.
5. Define or refine roles and responsibilities with U-M events.

KEY DATES

JUNE 22 & 23 - BLAZE & BLUE GIRLS CAMP

JULY 16 - 18 - ANN ARBOR ART FAIR - EOC

JULY 24 & 25 - MORGAN WALLEN CONCERT @ MICHIGAN STADIUM - EOC

AUGUST 1 - ANN ARBOR PRIDE - EOC

AUGUST 4 - ELECTION DAY - VIRTUAL EOC

SEPTEMBER 5 - U-M VS. WESTERN MICHIGAN - EOC



Partnership Spotlight: The DDA

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has become a key partner in supporting special event preparedness and operations. Over the past year, the DDA has worked closely with EM, AAPD, AAFD, and Public Services to enhance road closure equipment used during downtown special events. Thanks to the DDA, the city is now working toward phasing out our old portable vehicle barriers and transitioning to Meridian barriers and retractable bollards. *A special thank you to Amber Miller for her exceptional leadership!*

EM UPDATES

Partnering with Places of Worship

Places of worship are community hubs that not only provide spiritual support but often provide education, childcare, and social services. They are places where people gather in community and often turn for support during times of crisis.

As community hubs, they often face a range of safety and security challenges, from severe weather and power outages to targeted acts of violence.

The Office of Emergency Management, Ann Arbor Police Department, and Ann Arbor Fire Department work closely with places of worship to help them mitigate and prepare for these known hazards. Through these partnerships, EM assists with emergency planning, evacuation procedures, severe weather preparedness, EOC coordination, and both short-term and long-term recovery.

We have seen an uptick in these requests due to several local acts of violence that have occurred at faith-based institutions, including the September 2025 attack at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Grand Blanc and the March 2026 attack at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield Township. Both of these tragic events involved a person with a gun ramming their vehicle into the building and setting the building on fire.

2027 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

We are working through the RFP process to update the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan, a key document that guides efforts to reduce the impacts of natural hazards and climate-related risks on our community. The plan assesses the city's vulnerabilities to hazards such as severe weather, flooding, extreme heat and cold, winter storms, and infrastructure disruptions, while identifying strategies to strengthen community resilience.

Over the next few months, we will be working to onboard a contractor who will help lead the 12-month whole community planning process. Stay tuned for more information!



Tabletop exercise with the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

AAPD Sponsored Election Training

Even-year elections require significant planning and coordination with the activation of the voting centers at UMMA and Duderstadt. We also work closely with the City Clerk's Office, AAPD, and the City Attorney's Office to update our elections Incident Action Plan (IAP). AAPD kickstarted our efforts this year with an excellent day of training. This training brought together our key election partners to begin discussing how we will approach planning and support this year's elections. *Thank you, AAPD!*

LEARNING FROM DISASTER

January 1, 2025, New Orleans Vehicle Ramming Attack

At 3:47 AM on January 1, 2025, as thousands celebrated New Year's Eve in the French Quarter, an individual drove a pickup truck up onto the sidewalk, around a marked New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) vehicle, onto Bourbon Street in New Orleans. The driver struck numerous pedestrians, killing 15 people and physically injuring an additional 49 before crashing into a stationary piece of construction equipment. This tragic event has shaped the way many emergency management, law enforcement, and event-planning organizations approach special event planning, including our teams here in Ann Arbor.



Mitigating the Threat of Vehicle Ramming Attacks (and Accidents!)

The Ann Arbor Art Fair covers a 30-city-block footprint through downtown, transforming public roadways into pedestrian-only spaces for hundreds of thousands of visitors who are often walking shoulder-to-shoulder. Protecting these crowds from both intentional vehicle attacks and accidental vehicle intrusions has been a priority.

In 2023, The Office of Emergency Management in partnership with the Ann Arbor Police Department, IT-GIS, and the Art Fair Directors, with support from the City Administrator's Office, developed a standardized comprehensive road closure plan for the Art Fair. The plan established consistent requirements for roadway closures and pedestrian protection measures, including the use of pedestrian barricades, portable vehicle barriers, and water-filled barricades.



LEARNING FROM DISASTER

New Orleans After Action Report (AAR)

The Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) published a formal AAR following the Bourbon Street attack.

Key findings for our EOC team:

1. Personnel availability for the EOC activation was limited due to the holiday.
2. Confirming fatalities requires pre-planning with the Medical Examiner's Office.

Applying Lessons Learned

Following the tragedy in New Orleans, our team conducted a thorough review of our road closure plan and vehicle mitigation strategies. For Art Fair 2025, we expanded our deployment of water-filled barricades to protect sidewalk access points and other potential vehicle entry locations, doubling the number used from 90 to 180. *A special thank you goes to the Ann Arbor Fire Department, who assist each year with filling these barricades.*

The New Orleans attack also influenced discussions regarding the types of vehicle mitigation equipment used during major events. In 2025, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) purchased 19 Meridian barriers, a crash-rated vehicle mitigation system widely recognized as one of the industry's leading solutions for protecting pedestrian spaces from unauthorized vehicle entry.



Equipment deployed for Art Fair:

- 187 - water barricades
- 123 - Pedestrian barricades
- 96 - Portable vehicle barriers
- 27 - Meridian barriers (borrowed 8 from Canton)

NEWSLETTER

Why this newsletter matters

- We want our Emergency Operations Team to be informed and empowered.
- We want to tell our story - highlight our successes and lessons learned.
- We want to inspire opportunities for further collaboration.

Your input matters. If there are topics you'd like covered, questions you frequently hear, or best practices worth sharing, we encourage you to reach out. This newsletter is for you, and we want it to be useful and relevant.



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