

# Security Spotlight

*An informational Guide for Securitas Canada Clients and Employees*



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## Crowd Control



*As the weather warms, people begin to congregate. From conventions to festivals, wherever large groups gather, there is the potential for crowds and for things to get out of hand.*

### Crowd Control Preparation Tips

Rallies, transportation boarding areas, labor protests, concerts and family reunions are very different types of events with one thing in common— crowds. These gatherings usually end without incident, but sometimes a peaceful crowd can become a threatening mob. As a security guard, you have a duty to protect persons and property, but what can you do when faced with an angry mob?

### What Is a Crowd?

A crowd is as a number of people close together. In small spaces that might be only a few people, while it might be many more in a large space, such as a stadium. Crowds are typically large groups that have come together temporarily for a common purpose. They are generally peaceful, but the condition of being crowded brings with it the potential for increased tensions.

### When a Crowd Becomes a Mob

Whether the group is large or small, circumstances can result in a calm crowd becoming a mob. In addition to the heightened emotional tensions caused by the lack of personal space, sometimes the event itself provokes intense emotional responses, such as with a sporting event between rival teams.

In an emotionally charged atmosphere, a crowd can erupt into chaos. Normally law-abiding citizens can succumb to mob mentality. Outbursts can be the result of a deliberate attempt to enflame the crowd by an agitator. Frustration can cause tempers to flare, and inclement weather, long lines at an event or the use of alcohol and other drugs can all reduce inhibitions and impair rational thought.

As a security professional, you should be vigilant, watching for any trigger that could change the crowd into a mob's mood. Observe the crowd and advise your team members and supervisors of anything that may provoke mob behaviour.

Mobs can be either organized or spontaneous. As a security guard, you are not likely to encounter organized mobs. Law enforcement agencies control such groups. If you encounter a mob, it is more likely to be one that forms spontaneously.

Understanding environmental factors and how they affect a crowd can help you assess a gathering and prepare for the possibility for it to turn into a mob. Factors that can change the disposition of a crowd include:

- **Degree of crowding** — invasion of personal space can lead to aggression
- **Temperature** — inclement weather can increase frustration levels at outdoor events
- **Sale and use of alcohol or other drugs** — individuals who are under the influence do not think rationally and can become combative

## Responding to a Mob

Your first priority is always the safety of yourself and the people and property you are protecting. The following defensive actions are appropriate.

- Address the crowd in an authoritative but non-hostile tone of voice.
- Maintain a confident and commanding posture.
- Keep aggressive individuals at bay. Symbols of authority can become targets. Be aware of your escape routes.
- Move site personnel to pre-identified safe havens and provide updates using the public address system.
- Secure the site against trespass and vandalism. Maintain visible posts at all open access points, as long as it is safe to do so. Control access per post orders.
- Turn security cameras outward to monitor any disturbances and record as much activity as possible.

If there is no immediate threat and transportation is available, consider evacuating occupants to a safer area. When evacuation is not possible, use all available resources to prepare for an extended lockdown. Riots can sometimes last for days, and during periods of civil unrest, first responders may not be able to immediately respond to calls for help. Prepare to be as self-sufficient as possible.

- First aid and medical supplies should be fully stocked.
- Firefighting equipment should be fully operational and at hand.
- Communications equipment (cell phones and radios) should be fully charged.
- Flashlights should have fresh batteries and replacement batteries should be on hand.

Participation in mob behaviour can occur because people are able to remain anonymous. Recent research has shown that people who were aware of being recorded were less likely to behave in a criminal manner. If possible, use a video recording device and make it known to individuals you confront. This may help deescalate the situation.

## Training Helps You Be Prepared

Mobs are unpredictable. The best way to manage them is through advance preparation and training. This article contains a number of preparation tips. Additional guidance can be found by reviewing training courses available through the Learning Management System (LMS) online classes.

## Preparing to Manage a Crowd

The likelihood of a crowd becoming a mob can be minimized with planning. Understanding the expected crowd can help identify and respond to potential trouble. Post orders should include a crowd profile. If the following specific points are not included, ask your supervisor for more details.

- Reason for gathering or type of event
- Area to be occupied
- Anticipated crowd size
- Characteristics of participants
- Identity of potential troublemakers
- Location of command posts
- Emergency contacts – including police, fire and emergency personnel

Understanding the many factors that can make a crowd unruly, and your ability to respond quickly and properly in the event of a disturbance, can help keep you safe.

## Crowd Security

The mood of the crowd will determine your role. With a peaceful crowd, you only need to observe and report. Often the presence of a professional, uniformed security officer is a sufficient deterrent to maintain order.

If the crowd becomes disorderly and threatening, your role is to secure everyone's well-being, as quickly as possible. Immediately call for assistance; dial 911; contact your supervisor; radio your command post or phone the local authorities, as prescribed by post orders.

## Securitas Stands Out in the Crowd

As a uniformed symbol of authority, your presence can dramatically affect crowd behavior. Maintain a visible presence and use the following guidelines to help preserve order.

- Behave professionally. Do not swagger, argue or become antagonistic.
- Focus on the crowd, not the event.
- Avoid physical contact with crowd members.
- Remain calm and alert at all times. Do not show emotion or react when antagonized.
- Maintain an even tone of voice, even when faced with aggression.
- Allow angry persons to verbally express their feelings. Actively listen and use pauses to gain control of the conversation.
- Set reasonable and enforceable limits of acceptable behavior for crowd members.
- Call for assistance, when necessary.