



## BLOCK PARTIES: CRITICAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

The Safety Director and the Law Enforcement Team issued two separate bulletins concerning vehicle ramming attack essential considerations in January 2025. These bulletins highlighted the importance of a "whole government approach" to preventing vehicle-borne attacks and mitigation strategies to prevent accidental vehicle ramming incidents. The spring and summer months will likely result in many outdoor community celebrations, some of which are organized by local residents or community groups, sometimes called "block parties." Such parties are often considered to be vital in building essential neighborhood relationships.

Such events might sometimes occur in homeowners' yards, local parks, open spaces, or even on a public street with the local police department's or local governing body's approval. This bulletin addresses critical "whole government" considerations for such events, particularly those on public streets or adjacent areas that might easily facilitate an intentional or vehicle ramming incident.

### Considerations for the Chief of Police

#### Initial Action:

- Discuss with the municipal attorney what local ordinances, if any, govern the application and approval process for having a block party or other organized event on a public street. Determine if the current application and approval practices are consistent with local ordinances.
- Determine who receives, reviews, and approves applications to hold a block party event. For example, are others involved in the process, such as the municipal clerk, mayor's office personnel, or other key stakeholders.

#### Develop a Comprehensive Application, Local Ordinance, and Review Process as Necessary:

- Ensure any process developed or utilized is supported by a local ordinance adopted by the Governing Body. Some considerations concerning the local ordinance to discuss with the municipal attorney:
  - All applicants are required to submit a block party application at least twenty-one days before any event.
  - Require applicants to include a copy of their plan to accommodate vehicle parking with their application.
  - Require that the block party applicant must reside on the block being closed and must be a minimum of eighteen years of age.
  - When the event blocks any intersections, a separate petition and application must be submitted for each affected cross street.

- Include a petition with the block party application and determine the number of residents of the street for the block party location who are required to sign the petition before approval of the block party will be considered. (Some communities might require 100%, or others might only require 80%, etc.)
  - The required start and ending times of any approved block parties.
  - The prohibition of alcohol, games, cooking equipment, inflatable rides, tents, canopies, banners, stages, or other fixed objects in the roadway.
  - A requirement that access for emergency vehicles must be maintained at all times.
  - Other rules and regulations determined by the governing body, such as but are not limited to hold harmless agreements and insurance requirements, implementing vehicle ramming protective measures, enhanced security practices, etc.
  - The use of sound amplification must adhere to the specific town's noise ordinance.
  - When the event occurs at a location governed by a homeowner's association, the applicant must provide a letter indicating that the homeowner's association has approved the event.
  - Describe any fees associated with the block party application or other costs.
  - Require that all trash and debris be removed from the affected streets as best as possible.
  - Require the block party applicant to provide a letter to all homeowners of the affected street(s) a minimum of two weeks prior to the event.
  - Determine the process of review and approval of the application and whether there is an appeal process if an application is denied.
- Consider including a copy of the block party application in the local ordinance. Some considerations for the block party application:
    - Date of the event, the start time, and end time.
    - The specific locations of the event, including cross streets and house numbers, if applicable.
    - The anticipated number of people attending.
    - The block party applicant and their contact information.
    - The names of any sponsoring organizations.
    - A map identifying the affected area and the parking plan.
    - The block party rules that are supported by the local ordinance.
    - Include a section in the block party application for approval or denial, and the approval section shall serve as a Block Party Permit.

## Insurance Indemnification Considerations:

- The government body, in consultation with the municipal attorney, should determine if any insurance requirements or hold harmless agreements must be provided by the block party applicant. Such determinations should be included in the local ordinance and listed on the block party application.
- All persons involved in developing this process should review the [Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund, Contractual Insurance Guidelines, Bulletin 25-26](#).

## Security and Safety Considerations:

- Read the Safety Director Bulletin, [Vehicle Ramming Attacks: A Whole Government Approach to Risk Mitigation](#), and the Law Enforcement Bulletin, [Vehicle Ramming Attacks: Essential Considerations](#), as these documents contain essential risk mitigation considerations that are likely applicable to many block party type events, and especially those that are occurring in the street. It is imperative that local officials understand that providing block party organizers with basic traffic cones or other standard roadway barricades might not be sufficient to adequately protect block party attendees when such an event is occurring on a roadway. Some considerations:
  - Discuss with the local governing body and municipal attorney the feasibility of requiring the deployment of barricades or vehicles that are capable of thwarting a vehicle-borne attack or an accidental vehicle ramming incident. The use of personally owned vehicles for this task is strongly discouraged because of the many risks associated with such deployment.
  - Include in the local ordinance the requirements for vehicle ramming protection, if any, and the responsibility of the block party organizers for any costs. Such actions might include, but are not limited to:
    - Staffing of the event with police officers and police vehicles.
    - Deployment of appropriate rated vehicle ramming devices.
    - Deployment of large trucks, such as those typically operated by the Public Works Department.
  - It is essential that any vehicles or barricades utilized to block the roadway can be quickly removed by appropriately trained personnel to ensure emergency vehicle access to the area.
  - Review the Law Enforcement Bulletin, [Juvenile Gatherings, and Flash Mobs: Critical Planning and Response Considerations](#).
  - Ensure that all barricades and traffic control devices comply with the [Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices](#).
  - Ensure a tour of the area occurs well in advance of the event by law enforcement, public works, and any other pertinent stakeholders so that any necessary repairs can be made, hazards identified, or any areas of concern can be addressed. The tour should aim to identify potholes, walking and highway hazards, damaged or missing signs, highway paint and markings in need of repair, traffic control equipment that may need repairs, street light outages, abandoned vehicles, overgrown trees or shrubs blocking traffic signs, streetlights or lines of site, and more. The tours should be completed by more

than one person and conducted both at night and at daylight to appropriately identify certain areas of concern. Furthermore, an additional tour should occur just prior to the event to identify any recently occurring issues.

#### Planning and Communication Considerations:

- Develop an Incident Action Plan (IAP) consistent with the police department's Incident Command System Policy (A sample policy is available).
- Ensure the IAP includes a copy of the approved block party permit, site map, and parking plan.
- Ensure officers working in the specific area know the event and have a copy of the IAP.
- Inform other first responders, such as fire, EMS, and OEM, of the event, and provide them a copy of the IAP as appropriate.
- Issue traffic notices or alerts to the local community and ensure regional emergency communication centers are aware of the event.
- Discuss with Public Works how refuse and other debris will be removed and when.

#### Additional Considerations:

- Review the [MEL Special Events Best Practices Resource Site](#) and the MSI Safety Direction Bulletin, [Special Events Best Practices](#).
- Review the MEL Law Enforcement Risk Analysis, [Law Enforcement Has A Unique Role in Active Shooter/Mass Violence Prevention](#). Vehicle ramming attacks are acts of targeted mass violence, and many of the strategies associated with active shooter prevention are applicable.
- Ensure officers and any personnel, such as public works staff, have been trained concerning the risks of vehicle ramming or mass violence incidents and consider how to best increase community awareness of the risks of vehicle ramming attacks. Some training and community awareness resource considerations:
  - The [Vehicle Ramming Action Guide](#) (2024). A brief overview is also available [here](#).
  - The American Society of Industrial Security video, [Why Vehicle Attacks Continue to be Effective](#) (3 Minutes and 40 Seconds).
  - The CISA Awareness Video [Vehicle Ramming Attack Mitigation](#) (12 Minutes and 38 Seconds).
  - The CISA [Personal Security Considerations Action Guide](#).
  - Ensure block party organizers are informed of the importance of the [See Something Say Something](#) initiative and the [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) and reinforce these essential resources before key events.

If you have any questions, please contact your Law Enforcement Risk Control Consultant.