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Stadium Alcohol Management: A Best Practices Approach

Richard Filce, Stacey A. Hall & Dennis Phillips

The University of Southern Mississippi

Correspondence with:

Stacey A. Hall

Stacey.A.Hall@usm.edu

The University of Southern Mississippi

College of Business

The University of Southern Mississippi

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Abstract

Sport managers have expressed the concern that the largest threat to fan safety emanates from alcohol overuse. A Turnkey Sports & Entertainment (2009) study asked 1,100 senior sport executives in the United States to rank various threats to fan safety. Alcohol abuse by unruly fans was listed by 62% of respondents, easily outpacing the next highest response of terrorism (18.73%). Previous studies have also identified an increase in violence and criminal activity relating to alcohol consumption at sporting events (Erickson et al., 2011; Menaker & Chaney, 2014). Intoxicated fans have been the source of numerous documented tort claims against vendors and facility owners (Bearman, 1983; Verni, 2006). Despite the known tort liability risk, administrators continue to make decisions without real evidence due to a lack of literature on alcohol policies at sporting events (Oster-Aaland & Neighbors, 2007). This paper will document the problems associated with alcohol consumption at sporting events, review current alcohol policies and barriers to the implementation of stricter policies, and conclude with research-based suggestions for best practices in stadium alcohol management relative to: policy and training, sales and marketing, tailgating, and detection and enforcement.

Keywords: event management, facility management

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Introduction

Sport managers have expressed the concern that the largest threat to fan safety emanates from alcohol overuse. A Turnkey Sports & Entertainment (2009) study asked 1,100 senior sport executives in the United States to rank various threats to fan safety. Alcohol abuse by unruly fans was listed by 62% of respondents, easily outpacing the next highest response of terrorism (18.73%). Previous studies have also identified an increase in violence and criminal activity relating to alcohol consumption at sporting events (Erickson, Toomey, Lenk, et al., 2011; Lenk, Toomey, & Erickson, 2009; Menaker and Chaney, 2014; Merlo, Hong, & Cotter, 2010). According to Lenk, Toomey, and Erickson (2009), tailgating and serving practices at sporting events may be contributing to a significant number of attendees having elevated Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) levels; this ultimately contributes to problems during and following sporting events.

Despite the well-documented problems with alcohol consumption and its relationship to fan injuries and fan arrests, the available literature describes a somewhat startling lack of uniform policies among college and professional venues – both inside the stadium and at tailgating events. In addition, because the risk to the facility includes substantial tort liability, professionals in the field require knowledge of the acts and omissions which may give rise to such liability. With this knowledge, an informed manager can work toward development and implementation of a more practical, effective and uniform alcohol management policy on game days.

This paper will document the problems associated with alcohol consumption at sporting events, review current alcohol policies and barriers to the implementation of stricter policies, and conclude with research-based suggestions for best practices in stadium alcohol management relative to: policy and training, sales and marketing, tailgating, and detection and enforcement.

Alcohol Consumption

Erickson et al. (2011) measured blood alcohol content (BAC) with a Breathalyzer instrument at thirteen Major League Baseball (MLB) games and three National Football League (NFL) games. The study included nearly 400 fans that were tested when exiting the stadium. Forty percent were positive for alcohol, and eight percent were over the

legal limit. As pointed out by the authors, by mathematical extrapolation, this would mean approximately 5,000 legally intoxicated fans leaving a stadium after an NFL football game. Among those who did drink, the mean BAC was 0.057 and fans under 35 years old were nine times more likely to have a high BAC level. In addition, Friday and Monday games showed significantly higher alcohol consumption than Sunday games. Tailgating was found to be a particular area for concern with 18% of the professional sports fans reporting they participated in tailgating. Fans that tailgated before the game had significantly higher odds of both a mid-range and high level BAC. Those fans in the high BAC group reported having an average of 6.6 drinks while tailgating (as compared to 3.7 drinks reported by those in the mid-range BAC group). These findings were also consistent with the results described in a *USA Today* article reporting 84% of fans attending tailgate functions before four Virginia Tech University football games consumed alcohol, and 46% of those fans had a BAC over 0.08 (Wieberg, 2005). Erickson et al. (2011) suggest that tailgating and serving practices within professional sporting events may be contributing to a significant number of attendees having elevated BAC levels which could contribute to greater levels of alcohol-related problems during and following sporting events.

Numerous studies have identified an increase in violence and criminal activity relating to alcohol consumption at sporting events. Lenk, Toomey, and Erickson (2009) found the most common problems reported to local law enforcement in connection to sporting events were fighting and problems with intoxicated patrons, with at least three-quarters of the agencies claiming to have received such reports occasionally over a two year period. In addition, complaints arising from tailgate parties were received by 38% of the local law enforcement agencies and 65% of alcohol control officials reported receiving complaints of intoxicated fans. Furthermore, only 57% of law enforcement agencies conduct underage compliance checks at stadiums, which is significantly less than the 77% who reported conducting these same operations at bars and restaurants.

Merlo, Hong, and Cotter (2010) reviewed arrest data in college towns on football game days and found arrests increased from an average of 12 on non-game days to 70 on game days. This included arrests for possession of alcohol by a minor, driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI), open alcohol container violations, possession of alcohol at the stadium, non-violent resisting of arrest, and battery. Menaker and Chaney (2014) sought to evaluate not simply the drinking behavior of fans at college football games, but also to measure the impact of different policies and environmental characteristics on that

behavior. The sample included seven stadiums located in the same state. Reported criminal activity and the number of patron ejections were found to be strongly related to certain game day variables. In particular, attendance, alcohol sales policy, and the start time of the game influenced an increase in crime. Alcohol-related ejections were influenced by the law enforcement policy on reporting ejections, temperature, attendance, and conference and rivalry games. According to Menaker and Chaney (2014) more of an effort should be made to educate and inform patrons of the alcohol policies, as well as scheduling earlier game times. In the event of later game times, tailgating restrictions were stressed as a method to reduce alcohol abuse before the game.

Tort Liability

It is not difficult to imagine that alcohol management issues often run parallel with risk management issues. Intoxicated fans have been the source of numerous documented tort claims against vendors and facility owners. Sport managers stand to benefit from understanding the implications of landmark personal injury lawsuits filed as a result of alcohol-related injuries at sports venues. The cases are particularly instructive regarding the areas of alcohol management policy, or lack thereof, which contributed to the claim of liability.

The largest verdict in United States history against an alcohol concessionaire topped $135 million. It arose from a NFL game hosted by the New York Giants at The Meadowlands Stadium in the State of New Jersey. It was litigated under New Jersey law in the case of Verni v. Harry M. Stevens, 903 A.2d 475 (Verni, 2006). In 1999, an intoxicated fan leaving the stadium caused an automobile accident which severely and permanently injured a two year old passenger in another vehicle. The victim was paralyzed and required a permanent respirator to assist her breathing. The stadium concession contractor (Aramark Services Management Inc.) was named as the primary defendant. The stadium owner, the team itself, and the NFL settled relatively early in the case for approximately $1 million (Conrad, 2006). Following the large jury verdict, an appeals court reversed the decision due to the trial court's use of an improperly broad standard for negligence. The trial court had permitted the plaintiff's lawyer to litigate the case on a theory that the vendor contributed to a dangerous alcohol culture at the stadium which permitted the intoxicated driver's blood alcohol content to reach twice the legal limit. According to the appeals court, New Jersey law limits liability under its Dram

Shop statute to those vendors who knowingly serve visibly intoxicated persons. The lack of training of vendors, past violations at the facility, and the culture of alcohol at the stadium are not relevant to whether there is proof that the customer was visibly intoxicated. The jury did not evaluate the case under a proper standard and because the court noted that the evidence of visible intoxication was less than overwhelming, the case was remanded back for trial under the proper law. Ultimately, Aramark settled and agreed to pay the family of the victim a total of $23.5 million (Brennan, 2008).

While New Jersey's statute uses a 'visibly intoxicated' rule, each state is free to develop (or not) its own standards for negligence related to serving alcohol. Some states, such as Nevada and Arkansas have no liability for alcohol vendors. However, most states have developed policies similar to that discussed in Verni (2006). For example, Mississippi uses the visibly intoxicated rule, and Missouri uses the similar 'significantly uncoordinated physical action' standard (Murphy, 2004).

In addition to the potential for liability related to stadium vendors of alcohol, courts have found that it is reasonable for the landowner to anticipate that the actions of intoxicated tailgaters may endanger others. The Indiana appellate court in *Bearman v. Notre Dame* expanded risk management from the stadium into the parking lot (Bearman, 1983). As Miller and Gillentine (2006) summarized: "If the university knows that heavy drinking accompanies tailgating, and heavy drinking by patrons creates an unsafe atmosphere for others, the university, as a landowner, should provide appropriate measures of protection for the patron" (p. 211). The facts in the *Bearman* case are rather simple. Christina Bearman was walking back to her car after a Notre Dame football game. Two men were fighting in the parking lot and as one of them fell into her from behind, she fell and suffered a broken leg. There were no ushers or security in the lot. The trial court initially granted Notre Dame a summary judgment on the grounds that the University did not owe a duty to protect Bearman. As Notre Dame argued, absent knowledge of a particular danger to a patron, it could not be liable for the acts of a third-party. The sole issue on appeal was whether such a duty existed. The Indiana appellate court reversed the summary judgment, holding that Notre Dame did owe a duty (Bearman, 1983).

The Court began by reviewing basic premises liability law. The operator, in this case Notre Dame, owes a duty to keep the premises safe, including safe ingress and egress for patrons. They also owe a duty to protect patrons from the actions of third parties if they have actual or constructive knowledge of the danger. The court cited the

Restatement of Torts section 344 which requires that the operator exercise reasonable care to discover possible dangers, i.e. a duty to patrol and inspect the premises (Bearman, 1983). The Court found that the University was aware that alcohol was consumed at tailgate parties and therefore had reason to know some people will be intoxicated. The Court was not persuaded by Notre Dame's theory that it was not liable because it was not aware of a particular danger to Ms. Bearman. In short, given the circumstances, the Court ruled that Notre Dame should have anticipated careless, or even criminal, behavior by drunken fans. The *Bearman* case confirmed that stadium operators cannot ignore behavior which they know or should know is likely occurring in and around the stadium.

As is apparent from review of the *Verni* and *Bearman* decisions, there should be a substantial effort made by sport managers to proactively address alcohol management through proper policy development and to actively monitor staff for proper implementation of those policies.

Alcohol Policies

Despite the huge numbers of people at risk, the known tort liability risk, and the apparent consensus that alcohol issues are a dominant source of threat to fan safety, administrators continue to make decisions without real evidence due to a lack of literature on alcohol policies at sporting events (Oster-Aaland & Neighbors, 2007). Rather, the tendency has been to make reactive decisions. Fried and Ammon (2009) reviewed many of the well documented incidents of alcohol-related fan behavior problems which elicited policy reactions. After the 2005 fight in which a patron threw beer on Ron Artest during an Indiana Pacers game, the NBA responded by reducing beer size and the number of beers that could be purchased. After an altercation between a Red Sox fan and a Yankee player, the Boston team increased its alcohol supervisors from five to nine. The MLB also stops alcohol sales after the 7th inning.

As further evidence of the lack of sufficient critical analysis of alcohol management policies, Fried and Ammon (2009) found that alcohol policies had not changed significantly in the 16 years since the authors had previously conducted a similar study. Among the 74 sport venue managers who were surveyed, 83.8% reported their facilities sold alcohol and slightly more than half of the facilities sold hard liquor. However, only 31% reported enforcement of the alcohol policy through specific staff training, and only 27% of the venues used written policies for alcohol management.

Faden, Corey, and Baskin (2009) performed an in-depth review of university alcohol policies. In a study replicating one the authors had performed five years earlier, they searched the websites of the top 52 national universities as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*. Encouragingly, they found that, as compared to five years earlier, the websites had improved both the quantity and organizational quality of the information provided regarding alcohol policy. Upon closer review, however, the data revealed several persistent shortcomings with the published policies. While 48 of the 52 schools had a main alcohol policy webpage, only 15 mentioned alcohol consumption at tailgating. Of those 15, 11 permitted alcohol at tailgating. Thus, less than one-third of these major national institutions mentioned a tailgating alcohol policy on their websites. This was, however, an increase from five years earlier when only eight mentioned tailgating policies. Among the 52 schools, only 21 mentioned alcohol consumption in the stadium (none allowed it).

Miller and Gillentine (2006) conducted a tailgating study of 98 NCAA Division I schools. Of those, 53% had a tailgating policy on the school website and an additional 16% were able to provide the policy via email upon request. The results showed that 31% had no specific tailgating policy. Among those schools with a standard policy about half designated areas for tailgating. Time limits were even less prevalent, as 62% had no policy for when tailgating could begin and 82% had no policy for when it must end. The authors noted that without limits on the hours, it is very difficult to design appropriate parking lot risk management policies. Almost all of the respondents (92%) allowed alcohol during tailgating, but only 68% addressed alcohol consumption in their policy. Two most common limitations placed on tailgating were prohibition on hard liquor (34%) and limitation on the quantity of alcohol that could be brought into the tailgating area (36%). One major concern described by the authors was that 41% of the responding universities reported no monitoring of the tailgating area by trained personnel. This is particularly troubling given the known link between active monitoring and a decrease in excessive drinking. It is also note-worthy that only 47% of the schools had a no re-entry policy at the stadium. Miller and Gillentine noted the national attention given to serious injury and death resulting from tailgating at NCAA schools: "…poorly organized and unsupervised tailgating activities can potentially have negative effects on the perception of the university and athletic department" (2006, p.202). In particular, adverse effects from alcohol consumption at tailgating could include not only a lawsuit and damage

award, but negative media attention, loss of time, energy and resources, and harm to reputation.

Restrictive Alcohol Policies and Barriers to Implementation

Before 1996, the University of Colorado was the only school in the Big 12 conference to sell alcohol at its football stadium (Borman & Stone, 2001). During the six home games of the 1995 season, the last prior to the alcohol ban, University police ejected 121 fans, made 20 arrests, and handled nine assaults. The 1996 season at the University of Colorado saw a 50% decrease in ejections, a 45% decrease in arrests, and a 89% drop in student judicial affairs referrals. The rates of incidents continued to be low for years after the ban, indicating that the ban maintained its positive impact. Also important to the university, there was no indication that the alcohol ban had an impact on season ticket purchases. In summary, the environment, or culture of alcohol consumption seemed to have been effectively changed at the University of Colorado without adverse economic consequences. Borman and Stone (2001) summarized the findings positively as follows: “The Folsom Field beer ban offers an example of what can be achieved when alcohol is eliminated from an environment that often fosters disorderly and disruptive behavior” (p. 87).

In contrast, Oster-Aaland and Neighbors (2007) examined a Midwestern public university which had recently changed its tailgating policy to permit alcohol. Tailgating was limited to one area with security present. Age verification was conducted and tailgating areas closed once the game began. Drinking rates and prevalence of problems did not increase after alcohol was permitted, however, students did perceive that their peers were consuming more alcohol. The authors hypothesized that the safeguards put in place explained the results, along with lax and inconsistent enforcement of the previous ban on alcohol. Although students had indicated allowing alcohol would increase their game attendance, it did not. Thus, while the various studies may seem to present findings which are inconsistent, the central message to be gained is not very different. The important fact is that a university must have a well-defined policy which is actively enforced. Results which minimize adverse incidents with intoxicated fans can be achieved, even with some alcohol permitted, as long as patrons understand and obey the rules.

While a well-informed sport manager may wish to implement more limitations on alcohol availability, many studies have shown that implementation of such policies

encounter some form of resistance. Glassman, Werch, Jobli, and Bian (2007) state that because football games on college campuses are a valued symbolic event, “perceived and real pressure from alumni, students, and other fans makes changing game-day culture difficult” (p. 258). In addition, controlling alcohol consumption inside stadiums is a sensitive issue as beer companies are the single largest advertisers in the sports television business, and beer sales make up a major source of concession revenue (Glassman et al., 2007). Glassman and his colleagues found that the more alcohol a fan drank, the less likely he or she was to support game-day policy interventions. However, heavy drinkers were the group most likely to support a policy of designating tailgate areas where consumption was allowed. Non-students supported increased enforcement of underage drinking more than students did.

Other studies have also noted some reluctance among fans toward new alcohol policies. Borman and Stone (2001) surveyed season tickets holders and students about the University of Colorado’s no-alcohol policy. While season ticket holders were generally positive, students were more negative. In practical terms, some policy recommendations may have budget concerns. Law enforcement in Iowa have been outspoken about the strain which the University of Iowa’s stricter tailgating policies will put on resources by increasing the jail population (Steinbach, 2010). In a separate debate, the North Dakota legislature recently defeated an effort to ban drinking at college sporting events (Peterson, 2011).

A Best Practices Approach

Given the barriers to policy changes, stadium operators must be armed with specific suggestions for improving alcohol management without upsetting fans or budgets. Previous studies have attempted to categorize policy approaches to alcohol management and provided possible measures to limit alcohol consumption.

Lyne and Galloway’s (2011) research study emphasized the implementation of a written alcohol management plan to document compliance tailored to risks presented by specific event type, and integrated with other functional departments such as communications, security, and staff training. According to Glassman et al. (2007), alcohol management strategies should fall into three broad categories, including enforcement, restrictions on marketing, and reduced access. Reducing adverse incidents relating to alcohol is also a function of having a properly trained staff. This includes both staff working at concession stands, as well as walking vendors. As

Toomey, Erickson, Lenk, et al. (2008) reported in a study of 16 professional sports stadiums, vendors were much more likely to serve underage or obviously intoxicated patrons in the stands than at concession booths. Regardless of whether alcohol is served in the stadium, the staff must be trained in how to identify impaired patrons and take appropriate action. Training should include parking lot attendants, ticket sellers, ushers, concessionaires and vendors (Hall, Cooper, Marciani, & McGee, 2012). Further, all vendors of alcohol should be trained through a certified program such as Training for Intervention Procedures (TIPS) or Techniques for Effective Alcohol Management (TEAM) (TEAM, 2007). In these programs, staff members are instructed on the signs of impairment, potential for liability, and how to intervene when necessary. In addition, TEAM staff members work with a venue to develop a customized Facility Alcohol Management (FAM) plan. The three step process includes assessing the current plan in areas of admissions, sales, and public awareness; developing necessary new policies; and training employees in age identification and identification of impaired individuals.

Among the 70 NCAA Division I schools surveyed by Lhotsky (2006), 97% confiscated alcohol at the gate, 51% denied entry to a patron trying to carry alcohol into the stadium, and 91% denied entry to intoxicated patrons. Among the group of 16 schools that permitted alcohol sales, 13 required TIPS or TEAM training. While virtually all of them discontinued sales at a specific time before the end of the game (15 of 16) and all of them limited the number of beverages per transaction, only 6 of 16 had a designated driver program. Furthermore, while 88.6% of the schools permitted alcohol, only 52 of those 62 monitored the tailgating areas. Recommendations included posting advisory signs that intoxicated patrons would be removed and that bags may be searched, monitoring tailgating areas, banning stadium re-entry (which was only in place at half of the stadiums) and also having security in parking areas after games (which was done in only 58% of the stadiums). Increased radio contact between concessionaires, medical and law enforcement personnel was also suggested.

Fried and Ammon (2009) outlined the most basic fundamentals of an effective alcohol policy, this included: gate/door searches to prevent entry of alcohol; security personnel and uniformed officers patrolling inside the stadium; revoking season tickets as penalty for alcohol violations, limiting size and number of beers; identification checks for age limits; beginning sales no more than one hour before game time and closing prior to the end of the game; utilizing closed circuit cameras to monitor parking lots and the areas of ingress and egress; and ensuring supervisors enforced policies. Lyne and

Galloway (2011) concurred with many of these policy suggestions and included the use of existing first-aid stations, which should already be staffed with qualified personnel to serve as an area to monitor intoxicated patrons until they are sober.

Problems with policy implementation and enforcement also occur outside the stadium. In a study of tailgating outside of football and basketball games, only 62% of respondents reported security patrol of the parking lots before games, and only 45% after games. In apparent ignorance of the tort liability potential, many of these sports managers (39.2%) stated they considered this to be the responsibility of the police (Fried & Ammon, 2009). Miller and Gillentine (2006) made several recommendations for specific risk management strategies for tailgating, including: development of alcohol-related policies, elimination of tailgating during the sporting event itself, limitation on hours before and after, prohibition of re-entry, punishing fans attempting to enter with alcohol, and banning glass bottles. In addition, Glassman et al. (2007) advocated restricting consumption to a designated, heavily monitored area. The American Bank Center in Texas has piloted a technology that allows patrons to use a pass card system in which the beer server swipes a card as an aid in monitoring consumption. The University of Pheonix Stadium in Arizona uses a computer network to swipe identification cards and monitor alcohol sales to patrons (Carter, 2010). Many professional and college venues have adopted a text messaging program which encourages fans who witness problem behavior to anonymously notify a centralized stadium security location (Schwarz, Hall, & Shibli, 2015).

With respect to proactive tailgate policies, Fresno State University requires that party sponsors must be registered (either as season pass holders or single-day). A registration stub or season parking pass must be displayed in the primary tailgate vehicle. In addition, registration cards are distributed as fans enter the designated parking lots where alcohol can be served. Patrons who violate the rules are asked to leave campus, cited by university police and are subject to revocation of tailgating privileges (Fresno State Police Department, 2014). Reliant Stadium in Houston, Texas now requires that anyone tailgating before Texans games have a game ticket or purchase a $10 tailgating guest ticket. Sales of the guest tickets must be made prior to game day and are limited to four per season ticket holder, and limited to a total of 2,000 per game (Zubowski, 2010). Positive and proactive public relations can also lend assistance in smoothing the transition to new policies. For example, professional and college teams can send information directly to season ticket holders regarding its

tailgating policies, including the ban on stadium re-entry, the time limitations, the possibility of vehicle searches, or any myriad of other policies. One recent example is the clear communication of policies for Metlife Stadium which was sent to season ticket holders conveying information on tailgating, alcohol policy, and the stadium text message line for reporting problem fan behavior (New York Giants Season Fan Guide, 2013).

After an extensive review of the literature the researchers identified four specific areas vital to effective alcohol management, this includes: 1) Policy and Training, 2) Sales and Marketing, 3) Tailgating, and 4) Detection and Enforcement. A summary of the various researched-based policy and operational guidelines for alcohol management for each area is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Stadium Alcohol Management: A Best Practices Approach.

Policy and Training	**Source**
Develop Alcohol Management Plan • Admissions and detection • Restrictions on sales and marketing • Public awareness	Lyne and Gallaway (2011); TEAM (2007)
Train Staff with TEAM or TIPS • Identify impaired customers and take appropriate action • Include concessionaires, vendors, lot attendants, ticket sellers, and ushers in training programs	Hall, Cooper, Marciani, and McGee (2012); Toomey, Erickson, Lenk, et al. (2008); Glassman et al. (2007); TEAM (2007)
Notify Stakeholders of Stadium Alcohol Policies • Utilize direct mail, website, signage, and social media outlets	Faden, Corey, and Baskin (2009); Menaker and Chaney (2014)
Sales and Marketing	
Time and Quantity Limits • Sales begin one hour before game and stop sales prior to end of game (supervisor enforced)	Lyne and Galloway (2011); Fried and Ammon (2009)

• Maximum two beers sold at a time with a maximum 16 ounce cup size	
Stop Sales Linked to Liability • Hand stamps to mark visibly intoxicated patrons • Consider utilizing electronic pass card system to track purchases • Verify ID to ensure legal age • Use inspectors to monitor compliance	Carter (2010); Oster-Aaland and Neighbors (2007)
Interventions for Intoxicated Fans • Designated area for customers to sober up • Designated driver program	Lyne and Galloway (2011)
Tailgating	
Monitoring and Compliance • Require registration by tailgate party sponsors • Limit alcohol use to designated area with focused monitoring • Utilize security in tailgate areas before and after games	Zubowski (2010); Glassman et. al (2007); Miller and Gillentine (2006)
Time and Quantity Limits • Limited tailgating hours before and after game and no tailgating during the game • No kegs allowed in tailgating area	Menaker and Chaney (2014); Miller and Gillentine (2006)
Detection and Enforcement	
Gate Practices • Conduct gate searches • Confiscate alcohol • Deny entry to visibly intoxicated fans • Post advisory signs • Enforce a no re-entry policy	Fried and Ammon (2009); Lhotsky (2006)
Surveillance • Establish text message system for fans to report problems • Uniformed security patrol inside and outside the stadium • Radio communication capability between	Schwarz, Hall, and Shibli (2015); Fried and Ammon (2009); Lhotsky (2006)

concessionaires and law enforcement • Utilize surveillance cameras to monitor gates and parking lots	
Enforcement • Discuss parameters for citation or arrest of violators • Enforce policies with ejection, revocation of season tickets, and/or termination of tailgating privileges	Fried and Ammon (2009); Glassman et al. (2007); Miller and Gillentine (2006)

Discussion and Conclusion

Approximately 130 million people frequent the 100 stadiums and arenas shared by the so-called big four professional sports leagues in the United States (National Football League, National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, and National Hockey League). In addition, approximately 37.6 million fans that attend NCAA Division I football games (NCAA Football Attendance, 2010). The safety of the combined 167 million-plus fans at these major professional and intercollegiate sporting events is at risk from numerous sources of accidental or intentional harm associated with alcohol consumption. However, because alcohol policies vary widely, or in many cases are unpublished or even non-existent, there continues to be a need for increased awareness on this subject. An effective alcohol management policy is an important part of a comprehensive safety and security plan for sports venues.

The research contained in the published literature supports a conclusion that alcohol management is generally under-emphasized by venue operators given the scope of the problems created. While there is a lack of consensus data to support an outright ban on alcohol in sport settings, and barriers to implementation of such a ban may make it nearly a practical impossibility, more must be done to regulate alcohol use. The twin threats of venue security and tort liability demand a measured, systematic approach to alcohol management.

At a minimum, sport managers should develop appropriate policies for alcohol management, train staff on those policies, and publish policies via effective channels readily accessible to fans. The research conducted in this field supports the use of four distinct areas of focus for alcohol management: policy and training; sales and marketing; tailgating; and, detection and enforcement. Sports venues should strive to adopt a best practices approach where feasible

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