



City of Seattle

Office of Emergency Management



SEATTLE SEAHAWKS VICTORY PARADE

After Action Report

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City of Seattle, Washington

After Action Report

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS VICTORY PARADE

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1 Executive Summary

On Sunday, February 2nd, 2014, the Seattle Seahawks defeated the Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XLVIII. That evening, work began on holding a victory parade through downtown Seattle on Wednesday, February 5th. Using planning done for the annual Torchlight Parade as a template, a planning team consisting of members from Seattle Police, Seattle Fire, Seattle Transportation, SeaFair, the Seattle Seahawks, the State of Washington, and others developed a plan in a little over two days.

The parade started approximately 40 minutes later than scheduled due to crowd issues at the starting point near the Space Needle. The Washington National Guard escorted some of the dignitaries in Humvees while the players rode in “Ride the Duck” amphibious vehicles that are normally used to take tourists around the City. After completing the two mile parade route through downtown, the event ended with a ticketed celebration at Century Link Field. All official events concluded around 4:00 p.m.

The weather on the day of the parade was clear but cold which helped to disperse the crowds once the parade had ended. Commuter and parade revelers were forced to wait in long lines to get on trains, buses and ferries. The Bainbridge Island ferry was reporting a one boat wait even for foot passengers. Mass transit worked late into the evening to ensure that everyone was able to get home.

Overall there were few problems encountered during the parade. The crowd was respectful and courteous throughout the event. Personnel from both Fire and Police passed on experiences demonstrating how attendees were helpful and supportive of their efforts. One example was how attendees helped in clearing a path for a medical response in a vehicle through the crowd. The fact that there were no arrests made by Seattle Police during the event demonstrates just how compliant the crowd was during the celebration.

Some lessons learned from inside the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during the event included:

1. Ensure that plans are in place addressing the issue of cell congestion and the intermittent ability of cell phones to place calls or send and receive text during high density special events.
2. Ensure that representatives from all the involved parties are readily available for event planning involving event for which there is short notice. For example, events based upon a sporting team winning a Championship game (e.g. Seahawks winning the Superbowl).
3. Ensure that those with special needs have adequate access to viewing areas during special events.
4. The City should identify a process for purchases in which the cost is not necessarily attributable to a single department or should be shared among multiple departments.
5. Address EOC access to live video which provides awareness of activity along the route.

2 Incident Review

2.1 Event Review

The welcome home Victory Celebration Parade was scheduled for 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. The parade route followed the route used in past Torchlight parades. The two mile long route started just south of Seattle Center at Denny Way, traveled south down 4th Avenue past Westlake Park, and finished at the north entrance of CenturyLink Field. The Staging area for the event was outside the Experience Music Project venue and became an active venue when the crowd effectively started the parade viewing at that location.

2.1.1 Pre-Event Preparations

The Special Events Office convened Seattle Police and other departments and partners to discuss basic planning in the weeks prior to the Super Bowl, with full participation pre-event planning commencing the Monday after the Super Bowl. This planning relied standard Special Event Committee work and collaboration that takes place between agencies during the annual Seafair Torchlight Parade and other large scale events. This provided a good planning foundation from which organizers could build an event specific plan for the Victory Parade. The biggest variable in planning had to do with crowd size. Planners were certain they would be dealing with crowds much larger than past Seafair parades. However, there wasn't a relevant past local event that could be utilized to absolutely forecast the crowd size or behavior dynamics expected for the mobile celebration event. The planning team relied in part on information from other cities that had experience in managing large downtown parades following professional sports championships.

2.1.2 Day of the Event

- The parade was delayed in starting by 47 minutes due to getting participants into the staging area, and crowds impeding the parade route. Once the parade started, it proceeded without any major incidents. There were no arrests and there were only 29 patients seen at Harborview. By 5 AM, large numbers of spectators were already waiting on the parade route.
- Field operations were managed under a Unified Command that included Seattle Police, King County Metro Transit including transit police, Seattle Fire and Seafair.
- Seattle Police utilized local law enforcement mutual aid agreements to provide additional police presence throughout the route.
- The Seattle Fire Department hired additional paramedics and firefighters for both the Parade Route and Century Link Field. Additional Aid Units and Medic Units were positioned on both sides of the parade (west and east) for quick responses. Bicycle medics were placed along the parade route and at Century Link in order to respond quickly through the crowds.
- The following departments activated their Department Operating Centers in support of parade operations:
 - **Seattle Police Department (SPD):** SPD opened their Department Operations Center to support Unified Command and manage City-Wide 911 calls for service throughout the event.

- **Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT):** SDOT activated their Department Operations Center (DOC) and Incident Management Team (IMT) to disseminate transportation information, coordinate modal activities, manage arterial operations, and supervise cleanup operations associated with the celebration. Upon the event completion, Street Maintenance crews assisted by Cleanscapes (hired by the Seahawk organization) and Seattle Parks staff worked late into the evening/early morning to ensure Seattle streets were cleared of debris and safe for the next day's morning commute.
- Many commuters waited in long lines to get on trains, buses and ferries after the event. The Bainbridge Island ferry was reporting a one boat wait even for foot passengers, which is extremely rare for a weekday commute.
- Seattle Public Schools reported 565 teachers absent out of nearly 3,000 teachers. On average there are between 270-400 teachers out per day. A total of 13,523 students reported absent out of 51,000 students enrolled in the district. For comparison, there were 2,770 student absences on the day prior to the parade.
- The event utilized vehicles from the National Guard to carry VIPs and Seahawks personnel to increase vehicle movement safety. The players rode in "Ride the Duck" amphibious vehicles which are normally used in local tourism.
- The parade ended at CenturyLink Field, where a ceremony was held for the players and fans. Century Link Field event attendance was estimated in excess of 31,000. Two additional viewing areas, one inside neighboring Safeco Field and a second in the North parking lot (for fans who could not get tickets), were available for watching the CenturyLink celebrations on large "jumbotron" screens.
- To address the increase in traffic into downtown Seattle, the Washington State Department of Transportation extended the opening of the Interstate 5 express lanes in the southbound direction an extra hour. Normally, the lanes close at 11 a.m. and reopen to northbound traffic by 11:15 a.m.

2.2 Emergency Operations Center Objectives

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. A total of 119 department and agency representatives united around common objectives in support of activities in the field. The Seattle EOC operational objectives were:

1. Monitor events and activities for ongoing situational awareness.
2. Strategize for potential consequences and plan for contingencies.
3. Maintain communication with response departments and agencies.
4. Provide coordination and support to event operations.
5. Coordinate public messaging through the Joint Information Center (JIC) with city departments and Seahawks.

2.2.1 EOC Missions

In addition to the customary city-wide coordination of plans, resources, and public information, the EOC was given three missions to focus on during the course of the event:

1. The acquisition of Port-A-Potties for event attendees in Occidental Park.
2. Overload of the downtown cellular network and the City's internet.
3. Egress planning to expedite the crowds going home.

2.2.1.1 Port-a-potties for Occidental Park

As the crowd to view the parade grew, there was an identified need for port a potties in Occidental Park located in Pioneer Square. Challenges arose as there wasn't an identified process for purchasing them. After SDOT agreed to pay for the items, an EOC team consisting of the Seahawks organization, Parks, SDOT, and SPD worked out a delivery plan to get the items to the park.

The Port-a-Potties were available, ready to go at a moment's notice, and at a location that was not blocked by the parade route or congestion, which made it easy for the vendor to deliver to our required locations in a timely manner. SPD provided assistance to get the trucks through the crowds and to the setup location.

2.2.1.2 Overload of the Downtown Cellular Network and City's Internet

As crowds converged on downtown in the hours before the parade, the EOC received reports that some responders and citizens were unable to get a cell signal. It was quickly determined through inquiries that the congestion only covered the downtown core and didn't extend to other areas of the City (First Hill neighborhood for example).

Just after 10:30 a.m., reports were at received into the Department of Information Technology's Network Operating Center (NOC) from SPD that there was a significant drop in download network speed on the City's backbone. The Department of Information Technology (DoIT) immediately began investigating. After speaking with the City's largest internet provider they learned that the slowness was due to high utilization across the entire region. There was nothing more that City IT could do to address the problem since the issue had to do with high demand outside of the City network.

The Joint Information Center (JIC) quickly developed messaging strategies to inform the public of the situation and ask citizens to reduce their use of cell phones for voice and data communications, specifically the uploading of videos to the internet. These messages were shared with all City partners who disseminated the information using a variety of means including traffic message display signs and "jumbotrons" at the stadium. Messages were also pushed to media outlets for dissemination using Facebook, Twitter, and direct phone contact.

2.2.1.3 Planning for the Crowds Going Home

Key agencies in the EOC worked to coordinate actions and messaging to manage the expected surge of people that would be looking to take mass transit home following the parade. The issue was that the celebration activities taking place at Century Link Field were scheduled to end during the start of traditional rush hour (4:00 p.m.), which placed extraordinary demands on mass transit and the transportation infrastructure.

Transit agencies worked internally on adding capacity and then coordinated their actions through their EOC representatives. Key actions taken by agencies included:

- Sound Transit added one additional Sounder train at 4:30PM which was the only train that could be added.
- Link light rail ran three additional light rail trains between Stadium Station and the airport. Those trains were double their normal length (four cars) and the extra trains ran as long as there was a need.

- King County Metro continued to run their peak rush hour buses past their normal times for as long as there was a need. Bus drivers helped with this by voluntarily extending their shifts.
- SDOT worked with the SPD to identify 10 key downtown intersections that would directly benefit from officer directed traffic control.
- King County Metro and Sound Transit coordinated with the EOC's Joint Information Center on the issuance of special releases detailing mass transit plans.
- Police monitored the crowd that remained in and around the Pioneer Square area adjacent to the Century Link Stadium.

2.2.2 EOC Joint information Center

The Seattle EOC Joint Information Center conducted operations the day before the parade and then formally opened in conjunction with the EOC activation at 6:00AM. During the course of the two days, the Joint Information Center distributed the following information to partners (Seahawks, SeaFair, King County, Seattle, Washington DOT, Sound Transit), local and national media and the public:

- Ten blog posts on alerts.seattle.gov
- Ongoing FAQ's updated throughout the day as new information developed
- Talking points for tweets and media calls
- 34 tweets on @cityofseattle
- The hash tag #celebrate48 was trending all day

Key messages (as transmitted) included:

- Please help us keep streets clear for emergency vehicles – stay on the sidewalks.
- It's cold out there! Remember to bundle up and layer for the parade.
- Show your pride by being safe and loud – no confetti, streamers or balloons.
- How Seattle celebrates 48– with patience. Lots of people downtown today – take a deep breath.
- Respect the fans and those around you watching the parade. Keep it safe.
- Please limit use of mobile phones and web access so important 911 calls can be made.
- Please be patient getting home. Fans have been arriving since 4 a.m. and it may take just as long to get out. Make it a family date night?



3 Actions Demonstrating Success

The event highlighted a number of successful actions. Among them were:

- Over a four day period, the City, led by the Seattle Police Department and Special Events Office, was able to successfully coordinate plans for, and conduct, two large events: the Super Bowl day deployment and response and the victory celebration parade.
- Several participants stated that leveraging the existing Torchlight parade plan was instrumental to the success of the Victory Parade.
- Amateur radio operators working with Seafair highlighted the capability of amateur radio to directly support field operations during special events.
- Despite the overload of the cell phone system, the City's internal phone system and public safety radio system maintained coverage and were operational throughout the event. During the Parade event, (800MHz) system capacity utilization varied between 13% to 19%. At the same time, there were over 2,500 active radios operating on over 160 talkgroups within the system.
- The Department of Finance and Administrative Services stepped up the day before the parade to offer a viewing area for spectators with access and functional needs in front of City Hall.
- This event highlighted the benefits in using WebEOC as an EOC incident management and collaboration tool for this event. The training provided by OEM on WebEOC aided responders in being able to efficiently use the tool.
- Several participants noted that the training during the City's recent Integrated Emergency Management Course (IEMC) prepared them for work in the EOC. A number of IEMC participants felt the time spent in the course helped them in collaboration and team work during the EOC activation.
- Street cleaning, Parks, and CleanScapes removed 27 tons of garbage. Everyone agreed it was an extraordinarily efficient clean up. Everything looked great by the following morning. While event clean-up is a requirement for all public events, the Victory Parade clean up model should be used as part of the ongoing events planning process.
- SDOT was immediately responsive in providing a draft request to SFD that established additional fire lanes along the parade route.
- Despite the unprecedented parade size and challenges in trying to keep the parade route open, SPD reported there were no arrests. Public feedback to the department overall was very positive with a number of citizens commenting on the professionalism displayed by officers who worked the event.



4 Challenges and Improvement Plan Items

The following items were identified as corrective actions requiring work or follow-up post exercise. The following items were issues which do not require an improvement plan.

- The Seahawks victory and subsequent parade event drew significant national and international media attention. It was recognized that the Joint Information Center should have been established the Monday before the parade and kept open through the day following the celebration. The media contacted many departments, including those that have no Public Information Officer, the following day for reports on how things went.
- The parade significantly impacted Amtrak's operations in and out of King Street Station. A series of meetings are being held to review field plans and options for improving station access during routine special events.

There were five items identified as issues requiring an improvement plan for tracking and correction. They were:

1. [Cell congestion in the downtown corridor](#)
2. [Compressed event planning and preparation](#)
3. [Special needs viewing and access to the parade](#)
4. [Identification of spending authority for event purchases](#)
5. [Access to live video along the parade route](#)

4.1 Improvement Plan Item #1: Cell Congestion in the Downtown Corridor

The size of the crowd in a condensed area of downtown overwhelmed available cellular services. This was an issue for both operations teams and parade guests. Representatives in the EOC reported difficulty in completing cell phone calls, whether initiating a cell call or attempting to contact a cell phone in the field. It is unknown if any EOC or field responder considered, or used, the Wireless Priority Service (WPS) and Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) options for completing a call.

There were media reports that parade attendees were not able to call into 9-1-1, however this was due to individuals not being able to get a cell signal and NOT due to an overload or bottleneck occurring within the 9-1-1 infrastructure. Those in the crowd who were unable to reach 911 to report a medical emergency resorted to asking uniformed officers to radio for assistance. Seattle Police and Seattle Fire coordinated medical responses via 800MHz throughout the event via Unified Command and Operations.

Some events simply overwhelm capability; in this event, the number of spectators temporarily overwhelmed many different systems. It is a reminder that all capabilities are inherently finite – and to plan accordingly.

This event highlighted the vulnerability of texting as a communications tool and similar vulnerabilities to other cell services during disasters. There were many reports of individuals not being able to text. Monitors in the EOC also noted a decrease in Twitter traffic during the height of the congestion.

Because cell towers are owned and operated by the private companies (AT&T, Verizon, etc.), there is very little the City can do to relieve circuit congestion during events that draw such a large crowd into a small geographic area. Although these companies possess the ability to bring in portable cell towers (Cell on Wheels), it is highly unlikely that a sufficient number of portable cell towers could have been deployed given the crowd size and density. This highlights the importance of having communications plans in place that address the loss/unavailability of both voice and data cellular service. Department and strategic plans need to address messaging for internal operational groups and the general public.

Recommendation:

The City should develop a communications plan or protocol that addresses how the City conducts critical communications (for both critical City operations and public communications) when cellular service is compromised. A solution should identify the critical communication needs, alternative options (such as Amateur Radio), and how those alternatives are used.

The City should also look at developing operational contingencies and public messaging strategies that specifically address situations when cell and text service is not available regardless of the cause (e.g. large parade impacting a small geographic region or a wide spread disaster that damages cell phone infrastructure).

The City should work with area cellular service providers that would have providers notify the City (EOC) when their system is at risk for overload or when an overload is actually occurring, during selected special events or disasters.

Lead Agency: Department of Information Technology

Due Date: Improvement plan that defined action steps including tactical approach with high-level actions identified by June 20, 2014.

4.2 Improvement Plan Item #2: Compressed Time for Event Planning and Preparation

This event involved creating a plan for a parade and rally in which attendance was expected to be in excess of 600,000. The core planning team had less than two weeks to develop options for the potential celebration, and two days to finalize the integrated plan with all parties involved and acquire the resources to support it. For comparison, Seafair spends 4-6 months to plan and prepare for its annual Torchlight Parade with an estimated attendance of 300,000.

A critical factor in the success of the planning effort was that the team used Torchlight parade plans and consulted with Seafair Torchlight parade planners as a starting point. It also helped that the core of the City's planning team were comprised of Seattle Special Event Committee members, who work together to review and approve over 400 special events that take place in Seattle each year.

A key takeaway from the early planning process was getting everyone to agree on a common set of assumptions that guided the overall planning process. Agreeing on crowd estimates strictly for planning purposes is one example.

The short planning time also made it difficult to obtain external resources including personnel and equipment.

Recommendation: Develop a framework for large-scale events that can be utilized during planning for future similar celebration / parade scenarios.

This framework would take best practices and lessons learned from the 2014 Seahawks parade to create a “canned” victory parade planning document. Such a template can define goals, objectives, maps (including viewing areas for special needs groups) and needed resources (e.g. fencing). Any process should include a specific review to ensure that there are an adequate number of port-a-potties to meet the anticipated demand. Planning for such an event should commence prior to the start of playoffs to allow for additional lead time in securing resources.

Lead Agency: Seattle Special Events Office, Seattle Special Events Committee, and City of Seattle Office of Emergency Management

Due Date: Fall 2014

4.3 Improvement Plan Item #3: Accessible Viewing and Access to the Parade

While ADA accessibility was a requirement of the Special Events Permit issued for the parade, available viewing areas and access to those areas for spectators with access and functional needs were inadequate. FAS stepped up the day before the parade to offer an accessible viewing area for people with disabilities in front of City Hall. There were people who used and appreciated having a designated area, but as soon as the parade neared 4th and Cherry, able-bodied parade viewers filled in the area and blocked viewing. There were also reports that people with accessibility needs had difficulties getting to and on buses due to the crowds blocking access.

Recommendation: Update the Seattle Special Events Ordinance, with assistance from the Committee for People with disAbilities, to clearly identify the review and approval process for accommodation of spectators with access and functional needs.

Lead Agency: City of Seattle Special Events Committee

Due Date: TBD

4.4 Improvement Plan Item #4: Identification of Spending Authority for Event Purchases

A spending process for EOC activations needs to be created which includes the means for purchasing items that are not the responsibility of any single department. The confusion surrounding which City department would accept responsibility for the rental invoice for the port-a-potties order for Occidental Park highlighted the need for a funding source that could be used for purchases during EOC activations for future events or disasters.

Recommendation: Develop a City-wide policy that describes how spending will be accounted for during disasters and other events. Such a policy should account for how non-agency specific requests will be accounted and paid for.

Lead Agency: City Budget Office

Due Date: November 2014

4.5 Improvement Plan Item #5: Access to Live Camera Feeds along the Parade Route

Several EOC responders felt they lacked situational awareness during the event which could have been addressed through live camera feeds along the parade route. A network of cameras could have provided the EOC, and other City Department Operations Centers with live video along the parade celebration route. During the parade this made it very difficult for police commanders, or representatives in the EOC, to fully understand the location and the size of the crowd, impacts to traffic flow and transit, monitor potential trouble spots, assess evolving incidents, or evaluate the effectiveness of crowd management operations. Currently cameras cannot be placed or used in a manner that supports special event operations or disasters until the City Council approves policies covering camera use that address privacy concerns.

Recommendation: Have City departments continue to work with the City Council and the Mayor's Office to develop and obtain approval for protocols allowing access to the wireless mesh system (which provides access to video feeds) during activations of the City's EOC and impacted Operations Centers during disasters and certain special events.

Lead Agency: Mayor's Office

Due Date: On Going

Appendix 1 – List of Agencies at the EOC

The following is a list of agencies that participated in the Seattle EOC activation for the Seahawks Victory Parade on February 5, 2014:

City Agencies

City Attorney
Customer Service Bureau
Department of Information Technology
Finance and Administrative Services (FAS)
Human Services Department
Mayor's Office
Office of Economic Development
Office of Housing
Parks and Recreation Department
Seattle ACS (Auxiliary Communication Service)
Seattle City Light
Seattle Department of Transportation
Seattle Fire
Seattle Office of Emergency Management
Seattle Police
Seattle Public Library
Seattle Public Utilities

County Agencies

King County Department of Transportation
King County Metro
King County Office of Emergency Management
King County Sheriff
Public Health Seattle / King County

State Agencies

Washington State Emergency Management

Federal Agencies

Amtrak
United States Coast Guard

Other Agencies

American Red Cross
Century Link Field
SeaFair
Seattle Commission for People with disAbilities
Seattle Schools
Sound Transit



Appendix 2 – Event Evaluations

Seattle OEM sent a survey immediately following the activation to evaluate the success of the EOC activation. Out of the 112 that attended 45 responses were returned. The following are selected questions from the participant survey.

Did we achieve success on the 5 objectives?

Objective	% that said yes
1. Monitor Events and activities for ongoing situational awareness	97.60%
2. Strategize for potential consequences and plan for contingencies	97.20%
3. Maintain communication with response departments and agencies	94.90%
4. Provide coordination and support to event operations	100%
5. Coordinate public messaging through the Joint Information Center (JIC) with city departments and Seahawks	94.40%

Overall, I consider that the Seattle EOC successfully achieved unity of effort in support of the operations conducted for the Seahawks Victory Parade through downtown Seattle.

Yes - 100.0%

Did you, or your department/agency, experience any difficulty or delay when using the phone or other communications system in the EOC or in the field?

Yes - 56.1%

No - 43.9%

During the period of time when the wireless networks were overloaded, did you consider using the Government Telecommunication System (GETS) or Wireless Priority Service (WPS) to help you complete a call?

Yes = 2.3% (Only one respondent indicated they used WPS: “Tried, did not help as the recipients phones are not part of the system lesson learned, we need to be educated more on this.”)

Please rate the success of the 3 missions that were worked in the EOC during the activation.

The acquisition of Port-A-Potties for Occidental Park
80.0%

Overload of the City’s internet
65.0%

Planning for the crowds going home
85.0%

Event Activity Ratings:

Respondents rated the following items on a scale from 1-5 with 5 being the highest

Activity	Rating
Pre-event/activation communications were clear and helpful.	4.56
The OEM Director led briefings were helpful	4.65
The Operations stand-up briefings were helpful	4.52
WebEOC provided me with situational awareness during the exercise	4.09
I was able to use WebEOC to manage tasks received from other departments	4.00
I was able to use WebEOC to task requests to other departments.	4.00
The video displays provided useful information.	4.46
EOC Snapshots provided useful information.	4.51
The maps were useful.	4.43



EOC Facilities Ratings:

Respondents rated the following items on a scale from 1-5 with 5 being the highest

Activity	Rating
EOC Check-in	4.87
Restrooms Cleanliness	4.77
EOC Cleanliness	4.95
Availability of Supplies	4.79
Lighting	4.95
Noise Levels	4.7
Lunch	4.34

