



**ATLANTA 2023**

**RISKWORLD®**

APRIL 30–MAY 3

# **After Action Review:**

## **RISKWORLD 2023**

### **Atlanta Active Shooter Incident**

# After Action Review: RISKWORLD 2023 Atlanta Active Shooter Incident

## Summary

RISKWORLD® 2023 was held in Atlanta, Georgia's Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) from April 30th to May 3rd. The conference drew nearly 9,000 risk management professionals from around the world, 300 exhibitors and delivered over 150 educational sessions. In addition to the education sessions, for the first time, RISKWORLD featured four keynote presentations that included: Opening Session Keynote Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. (SHRM CEO), Awards & Leadership Keynote Josh Linkner (Jazz musician, author, entrepreneur), State of the Industry Keynote Evan Greenberg (CHUBB CEO), and Closing Finale Keynote Danica Patrick (former NASCAR driver).

To accommodate RISKWORLD 2023 guests, 32 hotels were contracted to provide housing for attendees. Additionally, shuttle bus service was provided to and from the GWCC to non-walking distance hotels. RISKWORLD 2023 had eight different shuttle routes serving 27 of the 32 hotels.

On May 3, 2023 (the last day of RISKWORLD) just after 12:00 p.m., an armed assailant opened fire at the Northside Medical Midtown facility located at 1110 West Peachtree Street, NW, approximately two-and-a-half miles from the GWCC. The incident resulted in one fatality and four others receiving medical treatment for gunshot wounds.

Atlanta's response to the attack resulted in a shelter-in-place in midtown Atlanta, road closures, activation of numerous city-wide video surveillance systems, air support, as well as investigations for numerous false reports of "shots fired." Atlanta Police Department (APD) had video footage of the suspect stealing a car and heading toward Cobb County, approximately 20 miles from the GWCC. The eight-hour manhunt culminated in a housing complex in Cobb County at approximately 8:00 p.m.

RIMS multi-faceted response to the active shooter incident in Atlanta comprised key action items derived from the Society's comprehensive crisis plan, collaboration with local authorities and GWCC staff, strategic communications tactics, as well as leveraging available resources and intuitive and spontaneous action.

This After Action Review aims to provide a timeline of RIMS response to the May 3rd active shooter incident, as well as key lessons learned from the experience and steps to enhance and guide RIMS onsite crisis plan moving forward.

# Incident Timeline

TIME (EDT)	LIAISON	COMMUNICATION	COMMUNICATION DELIVERY
12:37	Atlanta Police Department (APD)	APD: Investigating Active Shooter.	LOCAL AUTHORITIES
12:38	GWCC	Chief of Police informed the GWCC.	LOCAL AUTHORITIES
12:42	APD	Confirmed Active Shooter. No suspect in custody.	LOCAL AUTHORITIES
12:46	GWCC	GWCC informed RIMS Chief Events & Sales Officer Stuart Ruff-Lyon of active shooter but no immediate danger to those in the Convention Center.	PHONE
12:52	RIMS	Stuart Ruff-Lyon reaches out to RIMS CEO Gary LaBranche and RIMS Communications Director Josh Salter	TEXT/PHONE
12:58	RIMS	Gary LaBranche informed.	IN-PERSON
13:00	Security	Impromptu Briefing by Dupree Security Outside of Ballroom.	IN-PERSON
13:05	GWCC	GWCC Staff Member Kim Allison met Gary LaBranche at Ballroom to escort him to the Response Center.	IN-PERSON
13:10	GWCC	All parties arrive at Response Center (GWCC Administrative Office).	IN-PERSON
13:10	BOD	A board member delivered initial notification via text of the shooting in Midtown Atlanta.	BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BOD) TEXT
13:10 - 13:30	APD/GWCC	Conflicting reports, all of which proved false: additional shots fired; suspect is on MARTA; suspected is "cornered."	LOCAL AUTHORITIES
13:18	BOD	A board member shared report via a text that the suspect is moving away from GWCC.	BOD TEXT
13:26	RIMS	Gary LaBranche informs RIMS COO Annette Homan.	PHONE
13:26	BOD	A board member notified all that RIMS is preparing a statement, gives basic details of the incident and that additional information is forthcoming.	BOD TEXT
13:26	BOD	A board member shared a false report that suspect was in custody.	BOD TEXT
13:32	RIMS	Gary LaBranche informs RIMS President Jennifer Santiago.	PHONE
13:32	RIMS	First Urgent Alert Message drafted by Josh Salter and sent for Mobile App Distribution.	EMAIL
13:34	RIMS Message Delivered	URGENT ALERT: RIMS is aware of the incident in midtown Atlanta and is working with local police, law enforcement agencies and the convention center to deliver you with more information. The incident took place in 1100 Block of West Peachtree (more than 2 miles from the Convention Center). RIMS urges all attendees to avoid that area until further notice. RIMS will continue to provide information as it becomes available.	MOBILE APP
13:35	RIMS	Gary LaBranche and Stuart Ruff-Lyon request housing list of attendees in impacted hotels.	PHONE
13:37	RIMS Message Delivered	All Staff, Please respond to this message to confirm your well-being and that you are safe at this time. Additional information to follow shortly.	TEXT TO ALL STAFF

# Incident Timeline






TIME (EDT)	LIAISON	COMMUNICATION	COMMUNICATION DELIVERY
13:40	BOD	A board member notified all that the RIMS Crisis Plan has been activated and only official communications from RIMS should be shared.	BOD TEXT
13:45	RIMS	TEXT to staff drafted by Josh Salter and sent to RIMS CIO Mike Peters for distribution.	EMAIL
13:48	RIMS Message Delivered	Attention staff. We are aware of the situation in midtown Atlanta. The incident took place approximately two-plus miles from the Convention Center. Please stay in the Convention Center. If you're in your hotel, please stay in your room. Avoid the mid-town area. RIMS is working with local authorities and will provide more information as it becomes available. Communications will be sent by text message.	TEXT TO ALL STAFF
13:49	RIMS Message Delivered	Email to Board with first URGENT ALERT message and TEXT to Staff.	EMAIL
13:51	RIMS	Gary LaBranche discusses the status of the Closing Finale with Jennifer Santiago.	PHONE
13:55	BOD	A board member shared that the suspect seems to be moving away from the GWCC. A decision regarding the cancellation of the Conference Finale would be made at approximately 14:15.	BOD TEXT
14:05	RIMS Message Delivered	Gary LaBranche provided incident updates to RIMS Board Directors.	EMAIL
14:07	RIMS/Connection Housing	List of guests in impacted hotels received.	TEXT/EMAIL
14:07	CNTV/RIMS	Gary LaBranche records video message with CNTV.	IN-PERSON
14:11	RIMS Message Delivered	Message created for Mid-Town Hotel Guests: URGENT ALERT FROM RIMS Please be advised that there has been an emergency incident in mid-town Atlanta. The safety of RISKWORLD attendees is our top priority. RIMS urges all attendees to avoid the West Peachtree area. If you are staying in the mid-town area, please consider staying in your hotel room until your hotel provides you with clearance. If you are in the convention center, RIMS recommends that you stay there. RIMS is working with local law enforcement agencies and is providing additional information to attendees via the RISKWORLD mobile app as it becomes available.	EMAIL
14:15	RIMS	Decision to cancel Closing Finale made.	DECISION
14:15	RIMS	RIMS notified Danica Patrick that the Closing Finale was cancelled.	IN-PERSON
14:22	BOD	A board member shared that the Closing Finale is cancelled.	BOD TEXT
14:25	BOD	A board member notified the group that GWCC signage is being updated with emergency messaging.	BOD TEXT
14:29	RIMS Message Delivered	URGENT ALERT -- In an abundance of caution, the RISKWORLD Closing Finale has been cancelled. RIMS will provide more information as it becomes available.	MOBILE APP

# Incident Timeline

TIME (EDT)	LIAISON	COMMUNICATION	COMMUNICATION DELIVERY
14:30	RIMS Message Delivered	Email to Board notifying them that the Closing Finale was cancelled.	EMAIL
14:30	RIMS/Sedgwick	RIMS Director of Sales Kris Wolcott reaches Sedgwick to discuss closing party.	PHONE
14:33	GWCC	GWCC began preparation to change digital signage.	GWCC SIGNAGE
14:39	BOD	A board member confirmed that transportation (unimpacted shuttle and taxi service) was operating as normal.	BOD TEXT
14:35	RIMS Message Delivered	Gary LaBranche and Stuart Ruff-Lyon address attendees in the GWCC Thomas Murphy Ballroom. Announcement included the cancellation of the Closing Finale and shelter in place in Midtown Atlanta.	ONSTAGE ANNOUNCEMENT
14:44	RIMS Message Delivered	Confirmation that all signage displayed:  In an abundance of caution, the RISKWORLD Closing Finale has been cancelled. RIMS will provide more information as it becomes available.	GWCC SIGNAGE
14:46	GWCC via APD	Suspect identified. Still at-large.	LOCAL AUTHORITIES
14:47	RIMS Message Delivered	Today's closing finale is cancelled. Please head to the Ballroom to check-in with staff.	TEXT TO ALL STAFF
14:47	RIMS	RIMS staff mobilized to provide attendees approaching the Thomas Murphy Ballroom with direction and information.	ACTION
15:06	GWCC via APD	Shelter in place lifted in Midtown Atlanta.	LOCAL AUTHORITIES
15:15	RIMS Message Delivered	Message delivered to RIMS Board: Shelter in Place order was lifted by the Atlanta Police.	EMAIL
15:19	RIMS Message Delivered	The Atlanta Police Department has lifted the shelter in place in Midtown Atlanta	TEXT TO STAFF
15:20	RIMS Message Delivered	Gary LaBranche and Stuart Ruff-Lyon deliver updates onstage in the GWCC Thomas Murphy ballroom, states that Shelter in Place order has been lifted; shuttle routes will be up soon but for now two shuttle routes serving the 4 hotels remain impacted due to traffic issues, gridlock.	ONSTAGE ANNOUNCEMENT
15:36	RIMS Message Delivered	URGENT ALERT - UPDATE – Atlanta Police Department has lifted the shelter in place in midtown Atlanta.	MOBILE APP
16:07	RIMS Message Delivered	The RIMS staff appreciation event this evening has been cancelled. Additionally, the RIMS-Sedgwick official closing party has also been cancelled.	TEXT TO ALL STAFF
16:08	GWCC via APD	Gunman no longer in midtown. Police focus on Cobb County.	LOCAL AUTHORITIES
16:28	RIMS/Sedgwick	Confirmation from Sedgwick on language to cancel closing party.	EMAIL

# Incident Timeline

TIME (EDT)	LIAISON	COMMUNICATION	COMMUNICATION DELIVERY
16:39	RIMS Message Delivered	CANCELLED: RIMS-Sedgwick Official Closing Party  Due to the unfortunate event that occurred in midtown Atlanta today, the RIMS-Sedgwick Official Closing Party (scheduled for May 3, at 7pm) has been cancelled out of respect to the families impacted and the safety of RISKWORLD attendees. Your well-being is a top priority shared by both RIMS and Sedgwick.	MOBILE APP
16:40	GWCC	All signage switched back.	GWCC SIGNAGE
16:50	RIMS / CNTV	Gary LaBranche video message received and posted to RISKWORLD website.	VIDEO
17:13	RIMS Message Delivered	A Message from RIMS CEO Gary A. LaBranche.	MOBILE APP
17:32	RIMS Message Delivered	CANCELLED: RIMS-Sedgwick Official Closing Party  Due to the unfortunate event that occurred in midtown Atlanta today, the RIMS-Sedgwick Official Closing Party (scheduled for May 3, at 7pm) has been cancelled out of respect to the families impacted and the safety of RISKWORLD attendees. Your well-being is a top priority shared by both RIMS and Sedgwick.	EMAIL
20:07	APD	Suspect in custody.	LOCAL AUTHORITIES

	<b>Red – Authorities</b>
	<b>Gold – GWCC</b>
	<b>Brown – RIMS Board of Directors</b>
	<b>Green – RIMS Action</b>
	<b>Blue – RIMS Communications</b>

# Notable Action & Key Takeaways

## Pre-Event Preparation is Critical

As an association dedicated to the advancement of risk management, RIMS has always placed a high-priority on preparing for adversity and uncertainty. RIMS has a comprehensive 72-page crisis plan for addressing an incident during RISKWORLD that includes: Activation and Deactivation plans, key locations and resources, communication and coordination, as well as guidelines for shelter-in-place and evacuation scenarios.

Additionally, the RIMS Events Team presents components of the Crisis Plan during an All-Staff call preceding the conference. RIMS also arranged for all staff who desire to become CPR certified, adding yet another layer of safety to the event.

RIMS engaged a private security consultant to advise on safety and security matters. This team provided a comprehensive range of services, including the use of EOD canines, monitoring of social media feeds and interfacing with local law enforcement.

In addition, additional language about safety and security was prominently added to the RISKWORLD website and in other places, and additional messaging was displayed during general sessions and throughout the convention center.

In advance of RISKWORLD, RIMS conducted a safety walk-thru of the facility. Another safety walk-thru was held at the convention center the day prior to the event. RISKWORLD 2023 extended an invitation to attendees to join the safety walk-thru to further educate them about the facility's amenities, egresses and safety features.

- **Key Takeaway:** A 72-page crisis plan developed for staff, while comprehensive, is too long to memorize and too big to carry.
- **Key Takeaway:** While thorough, the existing Crisis Plan mainly focuses on emergency incidents in or near the convention center as opposed to emergencies in the city.
- **Key Takeaway:** Some aspects of the Crisis Plan were outdated – for example: storing the crisis plan on a “thumb drive,” and carrying a hard copy of contact lists.
- **Key Takeaway:** Safety walk-thrus provided an important and helpful orientation.

## Support from Local Authorities

With several incidents of civil unrest and the coinciding Taylor Swift concert that would take place during RISKWORLD, RIMS held several advance meetings with local law enforcement and GWCC staff. The meetings allowed RIMS to address looming housing issues, potential traffic interruptions and structure events held outside of the convention center more effectively. In addition to providing critical intel regarding potential issues, the meetings promoted familiarity and helped to identify roles, responsibilities and capabilities.

- **Key Takeaway:** Having an understanding of the convention center's safety capabilities, as well as what authorities will be onsite during an emergency was helpful.
- **Key Takeaway:** Having a map of geographic areas in the city where RIMS has exposures would help RIMS identify crisis (and those impacted) quicker.

## Meeting Point

Upon learning of the incident, RIMS Staff was instructed to (a) meet in the ballroom if they were in the convention center; (b) remain in their room if they were in their hotel, until further notice.

- **Key Takeaway:** RIMS staff presence at the entrance to the Thomas Murphy Ballroom allowed RIMS to effectively deliver direction and new information.
- **Key Takeaway:** Identifying a safe place for staff to convene in the event of an emergency not only helped to ensure the safety of employees, but also provided yet another opportunity for RIMS to account for its employees.

## Housing and Shuttle Service

At the height of the active shooter incident, it became apparent that four of RISKWORLD's 32 hotels were in the impacted area – midtown Atlanta. Working with RIMS vendor Housing Connections, a list of attendees staying in the effected hotels was provided to RIMS leadership. Subsequently, an email alert was then able to be sent to those on the list.

Additionally, RIMS collaborated with its shuttle bus vendor TCS Transportation Services. Two shuttle routes were impacted by the incident in midtown.

- **Key Takeaway:** Housing Connections possesses the ability to build a list of RISKWORLD attendees by the hotel they are staying in.
- **Key Takeaway:** RIMS did not receive any communications from its hotel partners.
- **Key Takeaway:** Shuttle bus service was disrupted during the incident.



# Notable Action & Key Takeaways

## Internal Communication

As noted in the RIMS Crisis Plan, in the event of an emergency, RIMS will initiate its “Telephone Tree” to notify staff of an incident. At RISKWORLD, the telephone tree was initiated.

RIMS employs a service that enables the Society to deliver text message notifications to staff. That service was employed during the incident. RIMS text messaging service is managed by RIMS Chief Information Officer.

RIMS CEO Gary LaBranche and RIMS President Jennifer Santiago were in contact via phone. Emails were also sent to RIMS Board of Directors by RIMS Director of Communications.

- **Key Takeaway:** A “telephone tree” can be an effective model to account for employees, but it is cumbersome and time-consuming.
- **Key Takeaway:** Text messages are useful to notify employees of danger, however, RIMS existing system does not identify if the individual has read the message, nor does it identify the staff member that replies to the text alert.
- **Key Takeaway:** The time between the initial text requesting a response of “safe” was way too long.
- **Key Takeaway:** RIMS Board Directors Text Message Group was an effective vehicle for RIMS President and leadership to provide updates and stay informed.

## External Communications

RIMS leveraged several tools to alert conference attendees of danger, to provide updates about both the incident and its impact on RISKWORLD. During the response, the RIMS team adapted to communication channels that were not in the original crisis plan.

RIMS Mobile App was used to deliver push notifications to all conference attendees who downloaded the mobile app and who also had “push notifications” enabled. Mobile App push notifications are managed by RIMS Business Events Manager. Note: attendees can choose to disable “push notifications.” About 50% of attendees had downloaded the Mobile App.

Email was another tool used by RIMS to deliver pertinent information to conference registrants. Email distribution is a manual process and had to be done in batches to avoid being “black-listed.” Realizing this, the RIMS team pivoted to use an “automated marketing software” to issue the emails in bulk, a process managed by the RIMS Director of Marketing.

RIMS also pivoted during the incident to issue notifications to attendees via the digital signage within the convention center. This was not in the original plan, but was a very effective adaptation, which was managed by the GWCC staff. RIMS also went outside of the written plan to collaborate with CNTV, RISKWORLD’s show production vendor, to record a message from RIMS CEO Gary LaBranche. The recorded message was shared via the Mobile App, email and posted on the RISKWORLD website. Additions to the RISKWORLD website are managed by RIMS Chief Information Officer.

- **Key Takeaway:** RIMS must improve instant attendee communication.
- **Key Takeaway:** RIMS Mobile App was an effective mode of communication, however, only half of RISKWORLD attendees download the mobile app.
- **Key Takeaway:** RIMS Mobile App also allows users to turn off push notifications.
- **Key Takeaway:** Changing digital signage throughout the convention center was effective, as was RIMS ability to quickly leverage CNTV to create a video message from RIMS CEO.
- **Key Takeaway:** RIMS adapted on-site during the incident and developed responses that were not contemplated in the original crisis plan.
- **Key Takeaway:** Most of the communication vehicles leveraged by RIMS are managed by different business owners.



# Enhancing RIMS Crisis Response

## RIMS Crisis Plan & Planning

1. RIMS will leverage the services of an outside vendor (potentially a current RISKWORLD exhibitor) that specializes in developing crisis plans to update, modernize and improve the RIMS Crisis Plan.
2. The updated plan will address incidents that happen within the convention center, as well as those that impact the surrounding city.
3. An abbreviated (one-pager) version of the Crisis Plan will be distributed to RIMS staff and modified for RISKWORLD attendees.
4. Prior to each RISKWORLD, a designated meeting spot for RIMS staff will be noted in the plan.
5. Develop a map that identifies areas within the city where RIMS has exposures (i.e., events, hotels, shuttle routes)
6. Develop a checklist that would include evacuation plans, rally points and communications strategies.
7. Implement scenario planning with desktop drills, on-site training, and other exercises to assess effectiveness of the crisis and communications strategies.
8. Build a cloud-based, internal Resource Center to house communications templates, plans, lists, etc.
9. Evaluate RIMS insurance coverage vis a vis different scenarios.

## Registration & Communications

1. To improve RIMS ability to effectively communicate to all attendees in the convention center, RIMS must make it a requirement that any person entering the convention center be registered for RISKWORLD.
2. RIMS will mandate that cell phone numbers for all RISKWORLD attendees are a required part of the registration process.
3. Explore and employ an emergency text messaging service to notify all attendees of an emergency. RIMS would agree to only use cell phone information in the event of an emergency.
4. Explore and employ a more sophisticated text messaging service to notify RIMS staff of an emergency. Throughout the year, RIMS would conduct a series of practice “drills” to ensure all staff members are receiving the messages and that they are prepared to respond quickly.
5. Key RIMS business owners who manage critical emergency communications vehicles will be identified and prepped prior to RISKWORLD. Examples of critical emergency communications vehicles include: text messaging, email messaging, mobile app alerts, digital signage, hotel outreach, shuttle bus updates and others.
6. Leverage communications channels such as general sessions and the Show Daily to communicate safety procedures.

## Local Authorities, Convention Centers and Future Convention Centers

1. Establish relationships with the San Diego Convention Center’s safety personnel, as well as city law enforcement prior to RISKWORLD 2024.
2. Define San Diego Convention Center’s safety capabilities and coordinate walk-thrus leading up to the conference, as well as right before it begins.
3. Prior to RISKWORLD 2024, understand the venue’s digital signage and public announcement system capabilities and the process for their implementation in an emergency.
4. Explore opportunities with the RISKWORLD audio/visual partner (FREEMAN) to assess capabilities to deliver messages in education session rooms.
5. Consider convention center safety capabilities in future site selection.

## Housing and Shuttle Partners

1. Collaborate with housing partner to develop lists of attendees, organized by hotel, prior to RISKWORLD.
2. Request that each hotel within the RISKWORLD housing block provide a direct, emergency contact person.
3. Ensure that RIMS private security team is connected with the shuttle service vendor to ensure RIMS leadership is informed of any issues impacting the city.