

GUIDELINES FOR  
**SAFE**

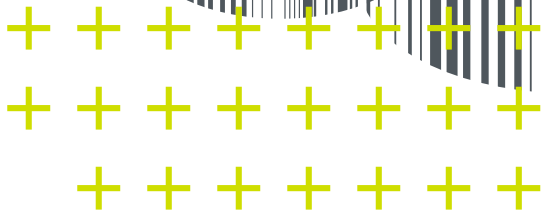
Dance Parties

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The Big Book

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# Foreword

Dance parties are becoming increasingly popular in New Zealand. As the dance scene is evolving, venues are changing from established or mainstream clubs to a growing trend for more outside and underground events. These developments may raise health and safety issues.

The Ministry of Health hopes that these guidelines will be voluntarily adopted and widely used by operators who hold dance parties. They are intended as a guideline of best practice for organising dance events.

These guidelines are an important part of the Ministry of Health's commitment to harm minimisation, reducing the hazards of drugs for dance party patrons who choose to use them, and promoting good safety practices.

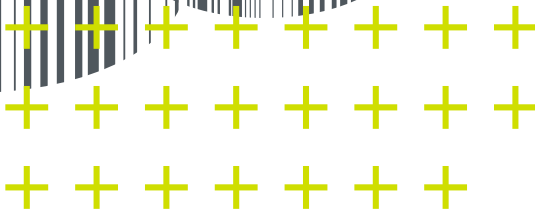
While the 'harm minimisation' approach adopted does acknowledge there is some illegal drug use in the dance scene, the emphasis is on organisers fulfilling a duty of care for 'punters' attending their events.

The guidelines do not condone illegal drug use in any manner but note the realities that some people will choose to use drugs at dance parties. For people who do use, the information in these guidelines seeks to minimise the harm caused by that drug use.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Poutasi".

Karen O Poutasi (Dr)  
Director-General of Health





# Acknowledgements

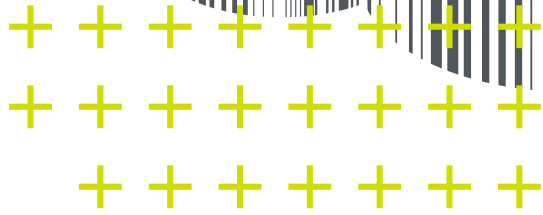
These guidelines were co-ordinated and developed by Health Action on behalf of the Ministry of Health.

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## Thanks to:

Those individuals and groups who participated in the consultation process. Particular thanks to Jose Cachemaille and Linda Glew from Health Action, and to Alison Greene, Simon Hendle and Grant Smithies.





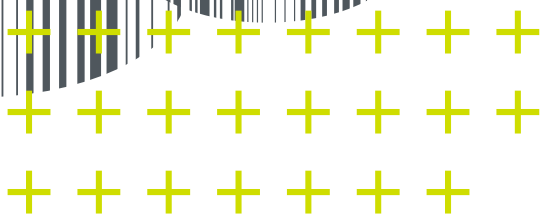
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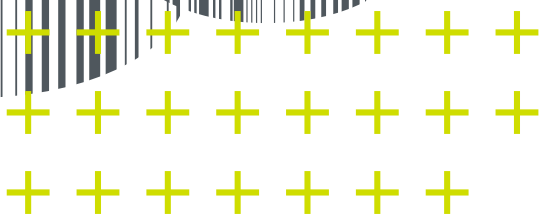
# Purpose

These guidelines provide dance party promoters who plan, manage, and operate dance events with the principles of best practice to safeguard the health and safety of people attending their events.

They are not intended to be rigidly imposed on all events and venues. For example, in some smaller venues it would not be financially viable to implement all the guidelines. However, promoters have a responsibility to comply with existing statutory regulations, council by-laws and occupational health and safety regulations.

The guidelines, together with closer co-operation and collaboration between promoters and representatives of all relevant health, law enforcement and regulatory bodies, should lead to greatly increased safety for patrons and a more positive public profile for dance culture as a whole.





## Background

The growth of a New Zealand dance culture is clear from the increase in dance clubs, warehouse parties, raves and festivals over the last four or five years. The numbers of people attending these venues is also steadily increasing. In particular, dance culture has been embraced by people between the ages of 15 and 30, from a wide range of occupations and lifestyles.

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Dance parties provide young people with another entertainment option at a time when such outlets are seen by many young people as being fairly few and far between. New Zealand has also seen a corresponding increase in related dance culture magazines, dedicated dance music shows on radio and television and greatly increased retail sales of both dance-related electronic music and fashion.

Illegal drug use is often linked with this trend. Anecdotal evidence and surveys demonstrate that illegal drug use is common amongst young people. More young people are taking a wider variety of drugs than ever before. The fact that many of the people choosing to take drugs do so within, or before attending, dance events adds significantly to the health and safety risks of these events.





Promoters and venue owners need to plan for the following issues:

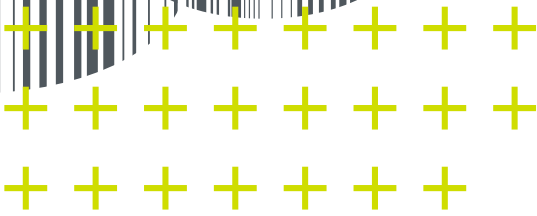
- problems associated with alcohol
- heat stroke
- dehydration
- paranoia
- disorientation and/or anxiety which are often associated with the use of dance drugs such as LSD, Ecstasy (also known as E) or speed (amphetamines).

Young people need greater access to high-quality, well-regulated and safer entertainment events. Many promoters are not aware of their statutory responsibilities and their moral duty of care. They have not kept pace with the increased demand for their events, or the complex problems that may arise at these events.

It is hoped that all dance promoters in this country will adopt measures to increase the safety and wellbeing of patrons attending their events. It is in everybody's best interests, and essential for the dance industry to continue to grow and prosper.

These guidelines were developed with input from promoters, organisers and dance party patrons. Definitions of terms used here are given on pages 22 and 23.





# The Venue

## Availability of Drinking-Water

Prolonged dancing may cause heat exhaustion and dehydration. Using drugs at dance parties may make these conditions worse.

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- Cold, clean drinking-water should be available, free of charge, at all times.
- Cold water supplies should never be shut off.
- Provide signs that clearly show where people can get access to cold, clean drinking-water.
- Patrons should be able to refill water containers once the original contents have been used. Keep this in mind when buying in supplies of bottled water to be sold at the event.
- If hiring a venue, consider including a requirement from venue operators, that tap water facilities remain fully functional throughout the whole event. Any problems with supply should be addressed before the venue is operational.



# Temperature Control and Ventilation

Temperature and humidity in venues used for dance events must be controlled for the comfort and safety of those attending. The promoter should take this issue seriously and address conditions that are uncomfortable.

- The means of ventilation should be appropriate to the type of venue and event. Any mechanical systems used must be in full working order and in operation when appropriate.
- Wherever practicable, chill-out space should be set aside for party-goers to rest up and cool down. These areas should be comfortable, and cooler and quieter than dance areas. It is recommended that chill-out areas be designated as smoke-free. (Contact your local public health service for advice on any legal requirements for smoke-free areas at your venue. Smoke-free signs are available.)
- At smaller (and some temporary) venues, there may not be enough space to provide a separate cooler, quieter area. In such cases it is important that the overall area is kept cooler to help prevent dancers from overheating.
- Dress codes should accommodate patrons who wish to remove outer clothing to keep cool while dancing.
- If possible, provide a secure room where people can leave their bags and additional clothing that people may have removed during the event.



# Environmental Factors

- Restrict access to potentially dangerous sites (eg, tops of speakers, power transformers or balcony rails). For outdoor events, cordon off any hazardous areas.
- Provide adequate and appropriate lighting in all areas to which patrons and staff have access.
- Keep all thoroughfares free from obstructions (including people) at all times.
- Signpost all exits clearly and light them well.
- Make sure that broken glass and other rubbish are cleared away regularly.
- Check all electrical systems regularly to ensure they are safe.
- Excessively loud noise can cause hearing damage. Assessing the noise output of the event, and limiting it to below excessive levels is the responsibility of the promoter. It is recommended that earplugs are sold at events.
- Do not use smoke machines to a point where vision is obscured since it may make evacuation difficult in the event of an emergency.
- Provide adequate toilet facilities for the number of people expected to turn up. Think about hiring portable toilets if there are not enough toilets available at the venue.
- Make sure there are clean and hygienic toilet facilities for both men and women.



# Preventing Overcrowding

- The maximum overall capacity of a venue must not be exceeded.
- A till, clicker, or finite number of ticket sales are all ways to record and control the number of patrons entering a venue. It may also be necessary to record the number of people exiting the event, particularly if there is a queue waiting to come in.
- Ticket numbers must be adjusted to include any guest or VIP passes within the capacity specified for the venue. This will enable you to keep an accurate record of the total number of people inside.
- Ensure that no localised overcrowding occurs. Thoroughfares (including stairs and landings) can become congregational areas, causing problems if people have to leave quickly.
- Deal with any overcrowding in chill-out spaces quickly. Too many people in these areas defeats the purpose of having a space to relax in.

# Door and Security Coverage

Security is important as a means of limiting the problems that might arise during an event, both for staff/crew and patrons. However, the need for good security should be balanced with the aim of providing a good atmosphere. Well trained and briefed door and security staff can make the event safe and enjoyable for everyone involved by defusing any problems quickly, and providing a safe environment.



Consider these points when planning door and security coverage:

- The roles and responsibilities of door staff and security personnel should be clearly defined and agreed upon.
- Door staff should be identifiable by their dress both to patrons and other staff. They should wear a name tag (first name only).
- Door staff should employ good door systems, including queue management, to allow efficient patron access both in and out of the venue.
- Door staff should be familiar with first aid and safety provisions, or be trained in these areas.
- If security services are being hired, check that all personnel have received appropriate training in the areas that will be required by the event (ie, search procedures if needed).
- The promoter or venue operator should have a record of which door staff and security personnel are on duty on any particular night, in case they need to be identified following the event.
- Venue operators should formulate a policy on searching patrons, developed with advice from the police.
- Any specific policies, including a complaints policy, should be clearly visible to patrons. Using signs is a good method. Including information on event policies in promotional material also boosts awareness of what is expected and acceptable at the event.
- Door and security staff of both sexes should be available and trained to carry out searches (if required).



# Host Responsibility

Host responsibility programmes are a good way to reduce the harms associated with the abuse of alcohol. The five current accepted strategies of the New Zealand host responsibility programme provide a sensible starting point.

The five strategies of host responsibility are:

- provision and promotion of substantial food
- provision and promotion of non-alcoholic and low alcohol beverages
- serving of alcohol with care and responsibility
- identification of, and responsible approaches to dealing with, intoxicated and underage people
- arrangement of safe transport options.

# Providing Food

It is important that, when providing food, you provide safe food. Talk with your local Council Environmental Health Officer about how to ensure that the food you provide, or sell, is safe.



## Alcohol Licences

Alcohol can, by law, only be sold and served under certain circumstances, and a licence must be issued to sell alcohol. Event organisers should contact the local District Licensing Authority (DLA) for details and licence applications. This needs to be done *at least a month before* the event.

Contact details for the DLAs can be found in your local telephone book (White Pages).

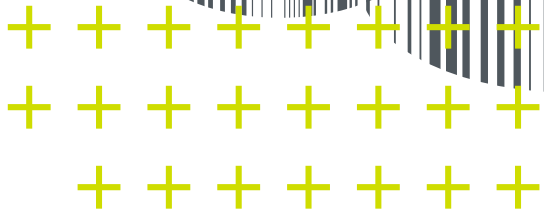
## Transport and Traffic

Promoters should ensure there is adequate parking space available for cars.

Alternatively, consider providing transport if the event is a long way from taxi services or public transport. This can minimise traffic and parking hassles, and also minimise risks associated with people driving while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, or driving while extremely fatigued.







# The People

## Staff / Crew Training

Promoters and venue operators need to ensure that all in-house staff, including security staff and door staff, are fully aware of the following issues and procedures:

- liquor licensing conditions and requirements
- procedures for evacuating the premises in an emergency, including a fire
- the position of all fire escapes and exits
- ensuring that all exits are unlocked and free of obstructions at all times
- the location and operation of fire-fighting equipment
- the need to inform the event manager of all accidents or incidents that take place, and the process for recording details
- the need to be aware of, and how to manage, illness and/or drug-induced medical problems in patrons. In particular, staff should be aware of heat stroke, seizure and collapse when the cause is unknown.



## Related Issues

- The promoter or venue operator, or someone with delegated authority, must be present at all times during the event, and be easily contacted by the police and other emergency services.
- At larger venues and large outdoor events, appropriate radio communication systems should be considered for added safety.
- Records of accidents or incidents should be kept for reference for at least a year. These records should contain as much information as possible. All staff should be aware of the reporting procedure, and an agreed format should be used.

## Insurance

Comprehensive insurance coverage should be arranged well before the event. Insurers may also impose certain conditions on the running of the event. It is the responsibility of the organiser to keep to these conditions.

Check out carefully what your liabilities are, and make sure that you are complying with local by-laws, other legal requirements and licensing requirements. Insurance coverage can be compromised if other requirements are not met. Check this with the insurance company concerned.



## Health and Safety Information

Information on personal safety, including issues like 'safer sex' practices, can be obtained from a number of agencies. A good place to check for local contacts is the 'Personal help services' section at the front of your local telephone directory. You could also contact your local public health service (see page 25 for phone number).

The provision of condom vending machines at the venue should be considered. Condoms are effective in preventing unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmissible infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea, hepatitis B and HIV.

People who inject illegal drugs may attend dance parties and are at high risk of transmitting blood-borne virus infections if they share injecting equipment. The provision of disposal bins will provide a safe method of disposal and reduce the chance of accidental needle-stick injury during the event.

## Medical and First Aid Provision

Organisations like the Red Cross and St John's Ambulance can be hired to provide first aid support to events, and can also provide training to other staff before the event.



- Dance events must be covered by adequate numbers of trained, first aid personnel. Check with the Red Cross, St John's Ambulance or your local ambulance service for information about how many first aid staff will be needed.
- All first aid staff should have a current certificate, and be able to recognise and give initial treatment to people with drug-related medical problems. It is important not to assume that all first aid certificate holders are familiar with symptoms and problems associated with drug use.
- First aid staff and stations must be readily identifiable to staff and to patrons.
- Consider setting up a dedicated first aid station or stations. Mark it clearly.
- First aid staff should have communication systems which allow them to be in contact with door staff, security, management and emergency services, as well as with each other.
- A joint briefing of all staff involved in the event can go a long way to making sure that the event runs as smoothly as possible.

## Drug Information

Given that some patrons may choose to use drugs at dance parties, promoters should consider providing information on harm associated with taking drugs, particularly the types of drugs that have a higher profile in the dance scene.

Drug information can be made available before the event by including it with tickets, putting it with promotional materials in cafes, CD shops, clubs and other venues associated with the



scene. Promotion for the event might include messages about not taking illegal drugs, or safer drug use. Other options include marketing events as alcohol-free and/or drug-free (and being strict on enforcing that policy).

Key messages that could be included in drug information material include:

- Drink about 600 millilitres of water an hour (approximately one H2GO bottle or similar) to keep hydrated when you're dancing. This is especially important for people taking Ecstasy (E).
- Water is *not* an antidote to E. Too much water is as dangerous as too little.
- Remember to take time out to cool down and rest.
- Look after your friends. Consider having one person in a group who is not drinking alcohol or taking anything else.
- Always watch your drink. Someone could slip some powder or a tablet into it without you knowing.
- There is skilled, confidential help available if anyone runs into drug-related medical problems.
- Mixing drugs, and mixing drugs and alcohol, can cause unexpected and sometimes serious health problems, and some really unpleasant side effects.
- People who inject drugs are at high risk of transmitting blood-borne virus infections if they share injecting equipment. The provision of disposal bins will provide a safe method of disposal and reduce the chance of accidental needle-stick injury during the event.
- Be aware that the decisions made while you're drunk or stoned (like who you get a ride home with), might not be safe or rational. Have things worked out before you head out for the night.

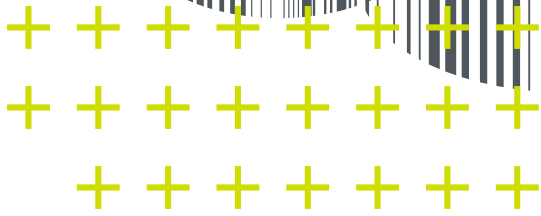


Information on drug use needs to be accurate and not oversimplified. There are myths in the community about drug use, for example the myth that people on E need to drink as much water as possible to keep cool. This can, in fact, cause dangerous fluid build-up in the body (especially the brain) and can be fatal.

Promoters can get up-to-date reliable information from a number of places. Some ideas for information gathering are listed in the *Contacts* section of this booklet on pages 24 and 25.

If using the Internet as a source of information on drugs, be aware that it doesn't always provide accurate information, and it may refer to drugs and conditions that aren't relevant to the New Zealand scene. Check information for accuracy before it's distributed, and use web sites of reputable organisations.





# Emergency Services Liaison

## Police Liaison

Promoters should contact the local police early to discuss planning and event details. The police can assist with advice on:

- minimising community disruption
- organising crowd control and providing advice on security arrangements
- establishing procedures for police attendance, and in what circumstances searches and seizures might take place
- backing up security arrangements if required
- securing the safety of staff and patrons if any problems arise during the event.



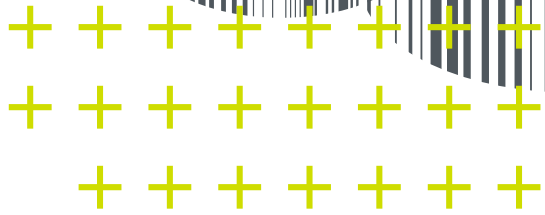
## Fire Service Liaison

The fire service should also be contacted prior to the event. The fire service can provide supporting services and information on:

- fire safety regulations, and how to make sure that the event complies
- requirements for fire exits and escapes, particularly important in temporary venues
- maximum venue capacities
- access – where, in the event of emergencies, the service can gain entry to the venue. This is important for both vehicles and fire-fighters.
- checking that the water supply is sufficient for fire-fighting. This is particularly important for temporary and outdoor venues.







# Outdoor Events and Temporary Venues

Follow the guidelines already given as they also apply when an outdoor and/or temporary venue is to be used.

The following issues also need consideration.

- Entry and exit points should be clearly marked and created if necessary.
- Fire safety requirements need to be checked (eg, to calculate the maximum number of people the venue should hold).
- Make sure that there's always access to sufficient water for fire-fighting.
- Council approval for using the venue for that purpose may need to be obtained (there can sometimes be zoning issues).
- The event must comply with noise and other local requirements.
- Install or upgrade ventilation systems if necessary in temporary enclosed venues (including marquees).



- If staging an outdoor event, make sure there's somewhere for people to keep warm if they're not dancing.
- The chill-out area could be set up in a tent.
- Make sure there are enough toilets available.

## Communication

Communication can be an issue for both temporary and outdoor events.

Communication links should be made with the police, the fire service, ambulance, and with other staff around the venue.

You need at least one operational land line, or enough cell phones with good coverage.

Consider setting up radio communications between staff.

## First Aid Sites

First aid sites at outdoor and temporary venues must be easy to find, and be operational throughout the event. All other points about training, coverage etc that are listed in the *Medical and First Aid* section of this booklet (see pages 13 to 16) also apply.

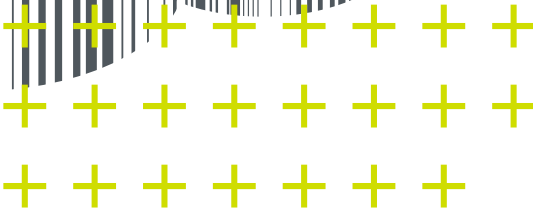


# Emergency Management

You will need to arrange the following emergency management points when planning an event outside or if you are using a temporary venue:

- pre-arrange a pick-up or meeting point with ambulance, the police and the fire services
- make sure that evacuation procedures and designated meeting points are pre-arranged, and that all staff know where these are and how to get there.





# Definition of Terms

## Collaboration

It is important that all interested groups involved with dance parties recognise the potential harms associated with these events and work together to reduce these harms.

Communication between police, fire services, local and national government and promoters is necessary in order to adequately address health and safety issues.

## Dance Parties

For the purpose of this document, dance parties refers to a variety of events at indoor or outdoor venues with an open area/s for dancing and listening to music.

## Duty of Care

This document also supports the concept that all interested groups have a Duty of Care to people attending dance events.



Promoters have a moral and legal obligation to act responsibly in relation to the health and safety of patrons at their events. This includes planning ahead to avoid foreseeable risks to ensure the safety of patrons and workers at their events.

## Harm Minimisation

The principles of harm minimisation are defined by the National Drug Policy 1998 as:

*an approach that aims to minimise the adverse health, social and economic consequences of drug use, without necessarily ending such use for people who cannot be expected to stop their drug use immediately. The primary goal of this approach is a net reduction in drug-related harm rather than becoming drug-free overnight, although harm minimisation strategies often lead to a reduced number of people who use drugs over time....<sup>1</sup>*

## Promoter

The term promoter in this booklet refers to all people who plan, organise or manage dance parties, whether in clubs (both licensed and unlicensed), other temporary venues (such as warehouses) and outdoors.

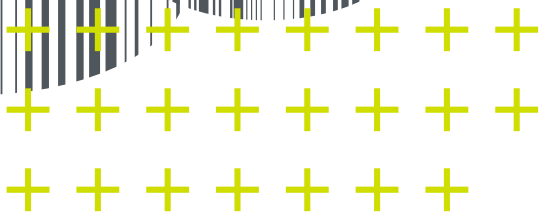
## Staff/Crew

The term staff means people employed to work the event or party. This includes crew hired for a one-off, or staff employed at a permanent venue that holds regular events.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health. 1998. *New Zealand National Drug Policy, 1998 – 2003*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.





# Contacts

## Personal help services

Contacts for 'Personal emergencies', 'Counselling & advice', and 'Health' are listed in the PERSONAL SECTION under 'Personal help services' at the front of your local telephone directory.

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## National helplines

Alcohol helpline 0800 787 797

Tobacco Quitline 0800 778 778

Youthline 0800 376 633

## Council contacts

City and District Council contacts are listed under the Local Government Services Section at the front of the BLUE PAGES SECTION at the front of your local telephone directory.

City and District Councils can advise you on contacts for Environmental Health Officers and District Licensing Authorities.



## Public health services

Public health services can provide advice on smoke-free areas and host responsibility. Public health services are located at Hospital and Health Services:

Northland Health	Ph: (09) 430 4100
Auckland Healthcare	Ph: (09) 262 1855
Health Waikato	Ph: (07) 838 2382
Pacific Health	Ph: (07) 307 8720
Tairāwhiti Healthcare	Ph: (06) 867 9119
Taranaki Healthcare	Ph: (06) 753 7798
Healthcare Hawkes Bay	Ph: (06) 834 1815
MidCentral Health	Ph: (06) 350 9110
Hutt Valley Health	Ph: (04) 570 0044
Wairarapa Health	Ph: (06) 378 9029
Nelson Marlborough Health	Ph: (03) 546 1537
Crown Public Health	Ph: (03) 379 9480
Healthcare Otago	Ph: (03) 474 1700

## Health Funding Authority

National Office  
PO Box 10-485  
Wellington  
Tel: (04) 495-9293  
Fax: (04) 495-9285  
Internet: <http://www.hfa.govt.nz>

## Ministry of Health web site

<http://www.moh.govt.nz>

