



# PREPARING FOR THE UNTHINKABLE

**Lorenzo Marchetti** outlines the importance of mitigating terrorist threats in public spaces

**I**n the wake of devastating terrorist attacks across the globe, the UK government is taking proactive steps to enhance security measures for public venues. The proposed Terrorism Protection of Premises bill, colloquially known as Martyn's Law, is a pioneering piece of legislation which aims to impose a legal obligation on operators of public spaces to assess the risk of a terrorist attack, establish a comprehensive framework for improving safety standards and implement

proportionate and reasonable measures to safeguard the public.

It is named after Martyn Hett, one of the victims of the tragic Manchester Arena bombing in 2017. In total 22 victims lost their lives to that attack, and it led to the Martyn's Law Campaign Team led by Martyn's mother, Figen Murray, tirelessly campaigning to introduce new laws to Parliament. The Government consulted with expert security partners, businesses, local authorities and the Martyn's Law Campaign Team on the proposals put forward in the legislation. This required a need for

**Publicly accessible locations encompass a wide variety of everyday venues including everything from sports stadiums, casinos and festivals to universities, transport hubs and shopping centres**

proportionality, to balance the safety requirements with other challenges that face those who run premises and events in public spaces.

As we brace for the enactment of this legislation, which is expected later this year, operators of public locations ranging from sports stadiums and concert venues to shops, schools and churches, will need to reevaluate their security protocols and crisis management strategies.

The challenges posed by Martyn's Law are multifaceted and complex. Operators will need to navigate an intricate balance between maintaining an open and welcoming environment for customers and visitors while also ensuring robust security measures are in place to detect and mitigate potential threats. These will range from adopting new security approaches to the installation of physical barriers and the deployment of advanced surveillance systems.

In addition to this, Martyn's Law emphasises the importance of fostering collaboration and information sharing among different agencies and organisations involved in public safety. This includes the establishment of communication channels and protocols for exchanging intelligence and coordinating response efforts in the event of an incident.

The implementation of Martyn's Law also involves the development of contingency plans and emergency response protocols. These plans outline the steps to be taken in the event of a security breach or terrorist attack, ensuring a coordinated and efficient response from relevant authorities and emergency services.

Martyn's Law has the potential to set a precedent for other countries and jurisdictions to adopt similar measures, fostering a more secure environment for citizens and visitors alike. By prioritising public safety and taking proactive steps to mitigate the risk of terrorist attacks, the legacy of Martyn Hett and other victims will be honoured through a commitment to creating safer public spaces for all.

To help prepare for Martyn's Law, all relevant organisations need to be aware of the steps that must be taken in advance to ensure their premises are secure and prepared in the event of an attack.

Failure to comply with the new regulations could have severe consequences, both in terms of public safety and legal repercussions: the operator will be at increased risk of vulnerability to terrorist attacks or other security threats, potentially putting lives at risk; there will be legal consequences, such as fines or even criminal charges, for failing to meet the required security standards; as always, reputational damage and loss of public trust is damaging for organisations that neglect their duty to protect visitors and employees; there are also potential civil liabilities in the event of an incident, leading to costly legal battles and compensation claims; and finally, hindering the efforts to create a safer environment will potentially undermine the overall objectives of the law.

One of the biggest hurdles in responding to a crisis, such as a terrorist attack, is the lack of cohesion and coordination among various teams and stakeholders. During critical incidents, crisis management, business continuity and security teams are often dispersed, facing numerous distractions that can lead to miscommunication, overlooked tasks, and delayed response times.

Effective crisis management hinges on the ability to centralise and automate response plans, activities, and resources through a common operating picture. This

unified approach ensures that all stakeholders, from field operatives to boardroom executives, have access to real-time information and can collaborate seamlessly, mitigating damage and downtime.

While public safety is the paramount concern in the event of a terrorist attack, operators of public spaces must also prioritise business continuity. The aftermath of such an incident can have far-reaching consequences, including potential disruptions to operations, loss of revenue and damage to brand reputation.

Developing robust business continuity plans that can be swiftly activated in the wake of a crisis is crucial. These plans should encompass strategies for maintaining essential operations, safeguarding critical assets and minimising financial losses. Additionally, having a comprehensive communication plan in place to disseminate accurate and timely information to employees, customers, and stakeholders is paramount.

## MARTYN'S LAW HAS THE POTENTIAL TO SET A PRECEDENT FOR OTHER COUNTRIES TO ADOPT

During a crisis, security teams often face immense pressure and high-stakes decision-making. Ensuring that these teams can operate cohesively and effectively is vital for mitigating the impact of an attack and protecting lives. One of the key challenges in this regard is the siloed nature of security operations. Teams may be spread across multiple locations, with varying levels of access to information and resources. This fragmentation can lead to delays in response times and inefficient coordination efforts.

Implementing a centralised command structure and establishing clear communication channels are essential steps in fostering collaboration among security teams. By leveraging technology solutions that provide a common operating picture and real-time situational awareness, teams can stay informed, share critical information, and coordinate their actions more effectively.

In today's digital age, technology plays a pivotal role in enhancing preparedness and response capabilities. Operators of public spaces can leverage a range of solutions to streamline their crisis management processes and ensure compliance with the forthcoming legislation.

One such solution is a centralised crisis management platform that integrates various components, including mass notification systems, incident management tools, and mobile collaboration capabilities. By consolidating these functionalities into a single platform, operators can streamline their response efforts, improve communication and facilitate real-time coordination among teams.

Additionally, advanced data analytics and machine learning capabilities can be leveraged to identify potential risks and vulnerabilities ahead of the events, enabling operators to proactively implement mitigation strategies and enhance their overall security posture.

Preparedness is an ongoing process that requires continuous training and exercises. Operators of public spaces, retailers, hotel owners and anyone else

welcoming the general public should prioritise regular drills and simulations to test their crisis management plans, identify potential gaps or weaknesses and refine their strategies accordingly.

## OPERATORS MUST ADOPT A HOLISTIC AND INTEGRATED APPROACH TO CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Table-top exercises, which simulate crisis scenarios in a controlled environment, can be invaluable in fostering collaboration among teams and ensuring that all stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities. Likewise, full-scale drills that involve the participation of the emergency services and relevant authorities can provide valuable insights and help refine response protocols.

Ultimately, ensuring compliance with Martyn's Law and effectively mitigating the risk of terrorist attacks in public spaces requires a cultural shift towards a mindset of preparedness. Operators must cultivate an environment where security and crisis management are prioritised at all levels of the organisation, from front-line staff to executive leadership. This cultural transformation can be facilitated through comprehensive training programs, clear communication of security protocols and by fostering a sense of shared responsibility among all

stakeholders. By promoting a culture of preparedness, operators can create a resilient and proactive approach to crisis management, better positioning themselves to safeguard the public and maintain operational continuity in the face of potential threats.

While Martyn's Law introduces a legal imperative to improving crisis management in public venues, there are multiple benefits for organisations across multiple other sectors. Looking at statistics across our own platform, it's possible to see that for customers who did not have a solution in place prior to using a crisis management platform, on average, they were able to reduce their initial response time by 50 percent. They also cut critical event management time by up to 60 percent. This was as a result of combining dynamic task lists and having the ability to instantly notify employees assigned to specific tasks. They also received real-time feedback and were able to automatically capture details of the crisis into a situation report, which would be beneficial for post-crisis analysis and receive real-time updates as the event unfolded.

As the UK takes decisive steps to enhance security measures in public spaces, operators must rise to the challenge by adopting a holistic and integrated approach to crisis management. By centralising response plans, prioritising business continuity, fostering cohesive security teams, leveraging technology solutions, conducting regular training exercises and cultivating a culture of preparedness, operators can effectively mitigate the risk of terrorist attacks and ensure the safety of the public while maintaining operational resilience ●

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