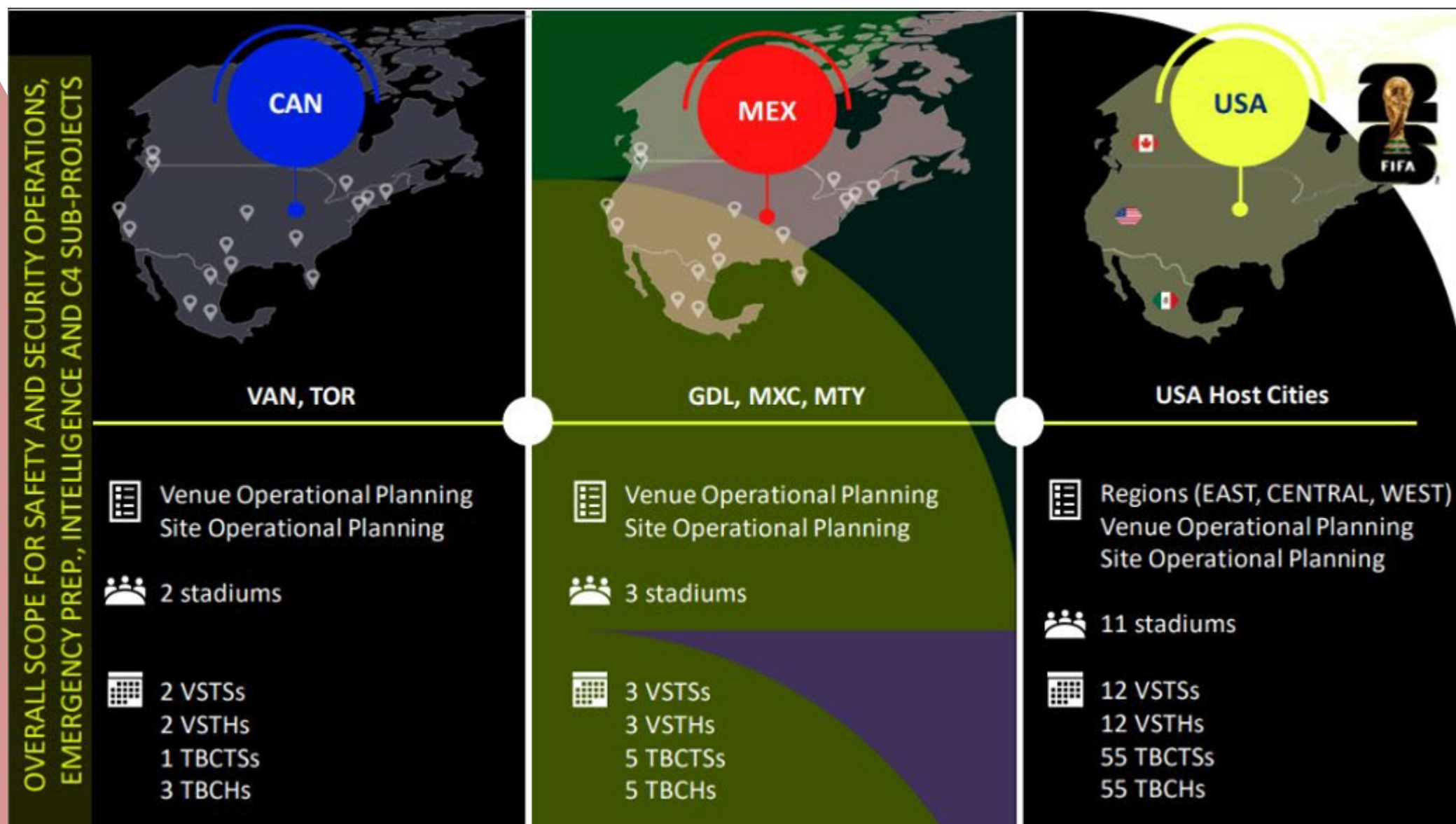


# **NEMA World Cup Task Force**

## **Forging a Unified State Front for World Cup Information, Preparedness and Impact Planning**

# Mission



- Critical Information
- Central connection point
- Mutual aid needs and resource challenges
- Unified voice

# Membership



# Activities to Date

## 8 Formal Meetings

Beginning in Dec 2024 through February 2026

Key topics:

- Event-wide situational awareness
- Resource gaps & EMAC
- Information sharing during planning, FIFA to States, HCOs to States, Cities to States
  - Venues
  - FIFA, HCO responsibilities
  - Resource responsibility
  - Planning guidance and documents
- Federal agency roles & responsibilities, integration with states

## Webinars & Presentations

- Understanding the Impact of FIFA World Cup 2026
- FIFA World Cup Panel @ 2025 Mid-Year
- Access & Functional Needs at Large Scale Events

## FWC26 FOOTPRINT

[Link to Google Maps \(EP\)](#)

### Host Cities

- 16 (11 US, 3 MEX, 2 CAN)

### Headquarters

- Miami (FIFA 26)
- Mexico City & Toronto (Country Headquarters)

### Operation Centres

- MOC, IBC, Tournament Operations Centre (TOC), Tournament HQ, ITCC
- Stadium Operation Centres (SOC) – all 16 Stadiums
- National Operations Centres: MEX (SOC Azteca) & CAN (SOC Toronto)
- Host City Operations Centre (HCO) - TBC

### Venue\* (other locations may be added)

- 1 Stadium
- 1-2 Venue Specific Training Sites (VSTS)
- 2 Venue Specific Team Hotels (VSTH) [might require up to 4]
- Team Base Camp Training Sites (TBCTS) and Hotels (TBCH)
- 1 FIFA26 Venue Office
- Airport(s)
- 1 HQ and/or VIP Hotel (incl. Referee Hotel)
- 1 Stadium Accreditation Center
- 1 Stadium Media Centre or 1 Main Media Centre per HC (incl. HC Media)
- 1 Volunteer & Uniform Distribution Center (at or away from stadium or part of "Venue Hub")
- FIFA Fan Festival(s)
- Other Host City Locations and/or "HC World Cup Hub – Tournament Information Centre" (OPS, HC Media Centre, Volunteer Centre, Ticketing, Uniform Distribution etc.)

\*Venue = Host city + stadium + all other tournament locations in a Host City



# External Engagement



- Big City Emergency Management Association
- Astho
- MS-ISAC
- FIFA

# Domestic Preparedness Journal articles



## Same Event, Different Realities: Building Accessibility Into Special Events

By Dawn Brantley and L. Vance Taylor

When talking about large-scale special event execution, it is easy to focus on the big picture: crowds, logistics, security footprints, and interagency coordination. These elements are critical, but they do not complete the picture.

For decades, emergency planning for large events has largely been designed around a presumed "average" participant. Even when planners and responders act with good intentions, the needs of individuals with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, older adults, and people with other access and functional needs (AFN) are often addressed late in the process, treated as special circumstances, or assumed to fall outside the core mission. That history has shaped outcomes and expectations.

In recent years, the emergency management field has made meaningful progress in recognizing and correcting those gaps. States like Massachusetts, California, Colorado, Washington, and Oregon, among others, have taken deliberate steps to elevate AFN into mainstream preparedness and decision-making. Large-scale special events present a

unique opportunity to continue that progress in a visible, measurable way.

According to Massachusetts' Commonwealth Fusion Center, during 2024, 1,263 medium-to-large-scale events were submitted to the center for Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR rating). That represents more than a thousand opportunities to get it right, or to miss something critical. And often, what gets missed are not the obvious security measures, but the accessibility elements that determine whether everyone can stay safe when conditions change.

Special events bring together people of all ages, abilities, languages, and cultural backgrounds. They also compress risk. When something goes wrong at a major event, common, everyday barriers can quickly become matters of life and death.

### LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

During the pope's visit to the United States in 2015, planners working on disability access encountered unexpected but consequential challenges. Older attendees and people with disabilities would be expected to wait for hours, yet benches were not initially included



## Beyond Host Cities: Connecting States for the 2026 FIFA World Cup

By Dawn Brantley and Sara Zalieckas

When states first began to assess the operational demands of the 2026 World Cup, critical gaps quickly surfaced. FIFA had been engaging primarily with host city organizations and host cities, but there was no formal mechanism for states to engage with FIFA or its subsidiaries. The information flow between organizations and across jurisdictions was inconsistent. Additionally, much of the early planning activity occurred without the involvement of state emergency management agencies, which resulted in limited visibility of timelines, operational requirements, and evolving risks. For an event that is spread across multiple states, reliant on shared transportation corridors, and dependent on coordinated public safety systems, this lack of structured communication and coordination posed significant challenges.

Recognizing potential negative consequences, the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) moved to close the gap. With its national reach and established relationships among state emergency management directors, NEMA had a

unique ability to convene states, facilitate information flow, and create a unified forum for preparedness. The deputy director of the Kansas Division of Emergency Management, Angee Morgan - a nationally recognized emergency management leader engaged in NEMA initiatives - recommended establishing a dedicated effort to ensure states had a voice, a shared operating picture, and a direct line of communication to federal partners and FIFA. Her assessment underscored a key risk: absent a coordinated state-level engagement structure, the nation could host a globally complex event with fragmented situational awareness and uneven preparedness.

NEMA's leadership acted on that recommendation and launched what would become the NEMA World Cup Task Force. The task force is led by Dawn Brantley, director of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and Sara Zalieckas, MEMA's special event and Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response program coordinator, with Jessica Byrski, senior policy analyst for NEMA, providing operational and organizational support. Together, this leadership team has



# NORTHCOM/NORAD 11 Cities Summit

January at Hotel Polaris in Colorado Springs

Small number of State Directors, Dep Directors attended



# The work yet to do...

## Tournament Footprint

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026™



**Team Coverage:**

- Team-specific risk assessment
- Close protection teams
- Team security liaison officers
- Escorts



**TBC security:**

- Threat and Risk Assessment
- Access control
- Crowd management plans
- Open to public sessions
- Privacy



**VSTS:**

- Security deployment for team training
- Asset protection

**VSTH:**

- Control of crowds around the hotel
- Access control



**Cities:**

- Last mile crowd management
- Airspace security
- Emergency preparedness
- Public safety and law enforcement



**Referees:**

- Access control
- Movements to airport and to stadiums
- VAR teams



**Countries:**

- Specific match risk assessment
- Inter-country movements and cooperation
- Police cooperation and data sharing