

Civil Disorder

General

Civil disorder is a term that generally refers to groups of people purposely choosing not to observe a law, regulation, or rule, usually to bring attention to their cause, concern, or agenda. It may also be defined as acts of violence by assemblages of three or more persons, which cause an immediate danger, or result in damage or injury to the property or person of any other individual.

Civil disorders can take the form of small gatherings or large groups blocking or impeding access to a building, or disrupting normal activities by generating noise and intimidating people. They can range from a peaceful sit-in to a full-scale riot, in which a mob burns or otherwise destroys property and terrorizes individuals. Even in its more passive forms, a group that blocks roadways, sidewalks, or buildings interferes with public order. Generally, there are two types of large gatherings typically associated with disorders: a crowd and a mob.

A crowd may be defined as a casual, temporary collection of people without a strong, cohesive relationship. Crowds can be classified into four categories:

- **Casual Crowd** – A casual crowd is merely a group of people who happen to be in the same place at the same time. The likelihood of violent conduct is non-existent.
- **Cohesive Crowd** – A cohesive crowd consists of members who are involved in some type of unified behavior. Members of this group are involved in some type of common activity, such as worshipping, dancing, or watching a sporting event. Although they may have intense internal discipline, they require substantial provocation to arouse to action.
- **Expressive Crowd** – An expressive crowd is one held together by a common commitment or purpose. Although they may not be formally organized, they are assembled as an expression of common sentiment or frustration. Members wish to be seen as a formidable influence. One of the best examples of this type is a group assembled to protest something.
- **Aggressive Crowd** – An aggressive crowd is comprised of individuals who have assembled for a specific purpose. This crowd often has leaders who attempt to arouse the members or motivate them to action. Members are noisy and threatening and will taunt authorities. They tend to be impulsive and highly emotional, and require only minimal stimulation to arouse them to violence. Examples of this type of crowd include demonstrators and strikers.

A mob can be defined as a large disorderly crowd or throng. Mobs are usually emotional, loud, tumultuous, violent, and lawless. Similar to crowds, mobs have different levels of commitment and can be classified into four categories:

- **Aggressive Mob** – An aggressive mob is one that attacks, riots, and terrorizes. The object of violence may be a person, property, or both. An aggressive mob is distinguished from an aggressive crowd only by lawless activity. Examples of aggressive mobs are the inmate mobs in prisons and jails, mobs that act out their frustrations after political defeat, or violent mobs at political protests or rallies.
- **Escape Mob** – An escape mob is attempting to flee from something such as a fire, bomb, flood, or other catastrophe. Members of escape mobs have lost their capacity to reason and are generally impossible to control. They are characterized by unreasonable terror.
- **Acquisitive Mob** – An acquisitive mob is one motivated by a desire to acquire something. Riots caused by other factors often turn into looting sprees. This mob exploits a lack of control by authorities in safeguarding property. Examples of acquisitive mobs would include the looting in south central Los Angeles in 1992.
- **Expressive Mob** – An expressive mob is one that expresses fervor or revelry following some sporting event, religious activity, or celebration. Members experience a release of pent up emotions in highly charged situations. Examples of this type of mob include the June 1994 riots in Canada following the Stanley Cup professional hockey championship, European soccer riots, and those occurring after other sporting events in many countries, including the United States.

Although members of mobs have differing levels of commitment, as a group they are far more committed than members of a crowd. As such, a “mob mentality” sets in, which creates a cohesiveness and sense of purpose that is lacking in crowds¹.

Throughout the history of the Commonwealth, riots have occurred infrequently. However, as seen in other parts of the country, riots can cause significant property damage, injury, and loss of life. Civil disorders vary widely in size and scope, and their impact is generally low.

History

Major civil disorders and riots have had a minimal impact on Juniata County. The County has not experienced any major incidences of riots. Small events occur more frequently; however, larger events, such as ones similar to the 1964 riot in Philadelphia or the 1989 prison riot in Camp Hill, are not common.

¹ Missouri State Emergency Management Agency, *Missouri State Hazard Mitigation Plan* (2004)

Vulnerability

Minor civil disobedience and public disorder is something that may occur, but with minimal impact. These events may be sparked for various reasons and the seriousness of the event may well be exacerbated by how authorities handle the crowd.

While civil disorder throughout Juniata County remains a possibility, it is more likely this would be experienced in the form of a prison riot. Such an incident could directly or indirectly affect the County. More often, these events are confined to the prison facility. The Federal Bureau of Prisons maintains three federal correctional institutions, one federal correctional complex, one federal detention center, and two U.S. penitentiaries in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. However, none is located in Juniata County.² The nearest is the high security United States Penitentiary in Lewisburg, PA, less than 50 miles to the north. The United States Penitentiary (USP) in Lewisburg is a high security facility housing male inmates. An adjacent satellite prison camp houses minimum security male offenders.

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections maintains 26 state correctional institutions, 14 community corrections centers, more than 45 private community corrections facilities, and one motivational boot camp, housing almost 43,000 inmates statewide. No State Correctional Institutions (SCI) are located in Juniata County. The closest State Correctional Institutions are approximately 50 miles away from Juniata County, in Huntingdon County and Cumberland County. The Juniata County prison is located in Mifflintown.

Living conditions are among the leading factors that contribute to prison riots. Overcrowding particularly exacerbates this problem. While the Juniata County Prison population averages below the maximum capacity for the facility, the prison has recently experienced some “extraordinary occurrences”. “Extraordinary occurrences” are defined by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in 24 categories, including riot and destructive behavior, and are reported annually for each prison. In 2004, the Juniata County Prison experienced no instances of “extraordinary occurrences.” In 2005, the prison experienced nine “extraordinary occurrences.” As of October 2006, the prison had experienced one “extraordinary occurrence.”

Probability

The probability of a large-scale or widespread civil disorder occurring in Juniata County is relatively low, with the likelihood of a significant event occurring every 30 years or less. Small incidents at correctional facilities, like the Juniata County Prison, may occur more frequently, but are not expected to significantly impact the County.

² Federal Bureau of Prisons. <http://www.bop.gov/>

Maximum Threat

The maximum threat of civil disorder taking place in Juniata County is at the County Prison in Mifflintown Borough. With an average population of 31 prisoners, this facility is relatively small. Should a disorder take place, it is unlikely to affect the surrounding area, and would most likely be confined to the facility. Other types of civil disorder such as youth vandalism, hostile demonstrations, or actions of extremist organizations could also take place. These events are normally rare occurrences and would most likely be focused in Mifflintown Borough, the County Seat.

Secondary Effects

Local government operations and the delivery of services in the community may experience short-term disruptions. Environmental impact is likely to be limited, unless acts of sabotage are performed. The greatest secondary effect is the impact on the economic and financial conditions of the affected community, particularly in relation in property, facility, and infrastructure damage from vandalism. More serious acts of vandalism may result in limited power failure or hazardous material spills, leading to a possible public health emergency. Altered traffic patterns may increase the probability of a transportation accident.