



# Certification *Profile*

## **The Iowa State Fair**

attracts more than a million fun-lovers from around the world each year. A proud tradition since 1854, it inspired

the novel *State Fair*, three movies, and a Rodgers and Hammerstein Broadway musical, as well as being featured in the book *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.

Tony Biancalana, CPP, has been the senior director of internal operations at the fair for the past two years. His duties for the Iowa State Fair Authority include oversight for human resources, risk management, parking, public safety, safety management, emergency and crisis management, interim and off-season events, admissions, information technology, and campgrounds.

The fair's size—420 acres, including a 160-acre campground near Des Moines—along with the site's year-round visitors, pose challenges to Biancalana and his team. During the fair, Biancalana supervises up to 50 people. Off-season, he supervises a full-time staff of seven. He reports to the CEO of the Iowa State Fair Authority.

Biancalana says he won't soon forget last year's opening day, which drew more than 42,000 patrons in under three hours. "We staged a promotional event where we offered free admission for a limited period," he recalls. "The fair grandstands seat 12,000. We thought we'd seat up to 5,000 fair-goers. We filled the grandstand and had more wanting to enter."

Even though they were not expecting such a huge turnout, Biancalana and his staff were prepared for the possibility.

"We had met with local authorities, emergency management, fire, law enforcement, EMS, traffic, public transporta-

tion, and others to prepare for best and worst case scenarios," he says. "Though we did not plan on the attendance we received, we were able to handle the numbers and kept the risks to a minimum."

Preparation for this year's Iowa State Fair, which will run August 13-23, began right after the 2008 fair closed. "We conduct organizational critiques immediately after the fair and scrutinize every process and component and make any necessary adjustments," he says.

Biancalana started his career in security as a lead security officer in 1986 at the Mercy Hospital Center in Des Moines. He held subsequent jobs there as an investigations coordinator, director of security, and director of facility services. "I enjoy analyzing security risks and vulnerabilities as well as interacting with people and helping them resolve problems," he says.

He joined ASIS International 16 years ago and earned his CPP in 1993. "This certification not only added to my knowledge but also gave me more credibility within my professional field and within my organization," he states.

"This additional knowledge and credibility assisted me in being more proactive in making decisions and keeping my employer up to date on issues and trends and potential impacts to the organization," he adds. "It also allowed me to keep security management in the forefront of the organization and included in the organization's strategic plan."

Biancalana would wholeheartedly recommend the security profession to others. "I'd advise anyone looking into this field as a career to seek out opportunities for additional training, education, and certification."  
—Profile by Vicki Moeser, ASIS public relations manager