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Crowd Control, Security Dominate Last-Minute Super Bowl Concerns

By [Kyle Stack](#)  February 4, 2011 | 1:00 pm | Categories: [Information Technology](#), [Venues](#)



Cowboys Stadium in Dallas cost \$1.2 billion to build, has already broken the 100,000-capacity barrier twice and, with 3 million square feet of space, stands as one of the largest sporting venues in the world. And Jerry Anderson has to somehow ensure an entire week of festivities inside and outside the stadium runs without a hitch.

Anderson, a senior partner at [Populous](#), a world-renowned design practice based in Kansas City, Missouri, oversees the firm's event group. His responsibilities for [Sunday's Super Bowl XLV](#) include

setting up and overseeing nearly every logistical facet that goes into running the game, not to mention all the events in the weeks and months leading up to it.

Whether it's real estate acquisition planning, crowd flow management or the installation of temporary infrastructure, Anderson has his fingers on it. "We redesign an entire stadium for the specific program requirements of the event itself — the Super Bowl," Anderson told Wired.com.

Anderson began working two years in advance planning Super Bowl events at Cowboys Stadium, a customary practice for such a large event. One of the primary issues he tackles first is the cabling system for telecommunications and wireless networks.

"We're living in what I would call a crossover era now where, even though we do have cellular technology — RF technology — you still have such an enormous demand for reliability and redundancy," Anderson said. "Hardware is still the rule on a lot of things."

Broadcast booths and the writing, work and interview areas for the press have to be rearranged. An expansive wireless network must be in place to handle the massive amount of activity expected from a group of over 5,000 media members who are credentialed to cover the Super Bowl. (Anderson pointed out there are normally 200 for regular-season games.)

The massive increase of photographers and broadcasters is reflected in the numbers: 8,000 linear feet of duct tape and 140,000 linear feet of electrical cable is provided for media, as well as 1,430 square feet allotted for camera platforms.

There are times when all the coordination in the world still can't prevent someone from bringing in a device that disrupts the game. Anderson recalled a mix-up in 1998 at Super Bowl XXXII in San Diego. A member of the media sneaked in a transmitter which hadn't had its frequency coordinated. When the time came for pop singer Jewel to sing the national anthem, the unsuspecting media person's transmitter stopped the signal that went to Jewel's earpiece. "She didn't know the anthem had started because she couldn't hear it on her earpiece," Anderson said.

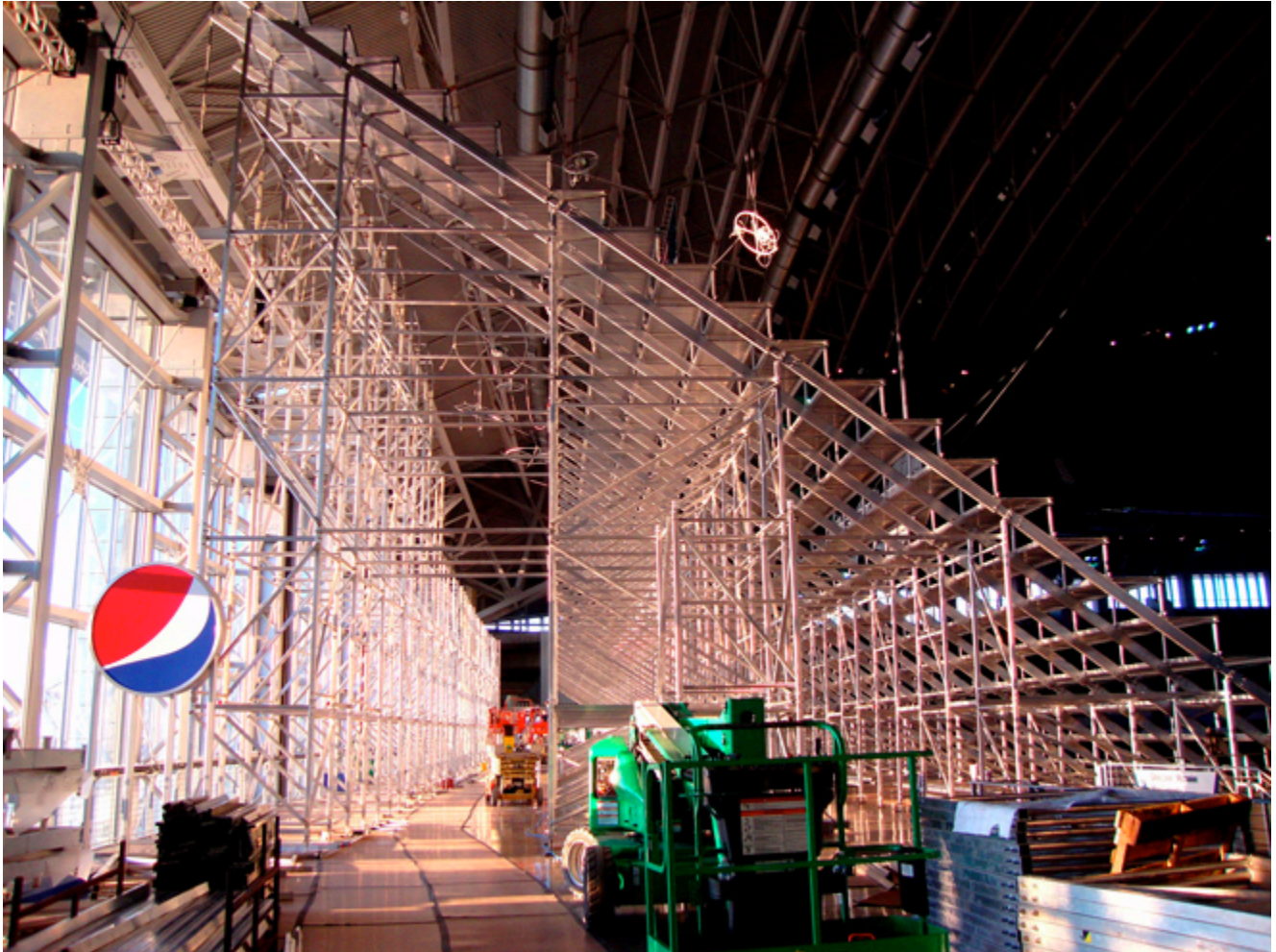
Perhaps no issue requires more attention for the Super Bowl and its related events than security. Local police and fire departments oversee plans, but regional, state and federal law enforcement departments help plan and coordinate all issues.

Anderson noted that since 9/11, security requirements for the Super Bowl have risen to those of the most secured events in the world, including the Olympics and the U.S. Presidential Inauguration.

Eight miles of chain-link fencing — wrapped with fence fabric for aesthetic purposes — is temporarily installed for the 1.5 million to 2 million square feet of space around the stadium. More than 3,000 feet of concrete barriers surrounding the stadium guarantee more protection. And visitors to the 200,000-plus square feet of temporary tents installed for parties, work areas and other needs will find that magnetometers and X-ray machines scan them just as thoroughly as they do in airports.

Then there's crowd flow planning. Anderson said over 100,000 people are expected in the stadium on game day: 93,000 ticketed fans, 10,000 credentialed workers (including vendors and security) and 2,000 NFL staff and management types. Populous brought in 14,000 temporary seats (see below) to

accommodate the 80,000-seat stadium.



And that's not to mention the 5,000 fans who are expected to pay a \$200 grounds pass to watch the game on a giant TV outside the stadium.

Anderson said 1,700 media members were allowed on the field for interviews during Tuesday's Media Day. Two thousand members of the cast and crew for the pregame and halftime shows will go through practice drills Friday, and stadium tours throughout the week have brought in 1,000 to 2,000 people a day.

Obviously, Anderson and his crew of 20 have much to coordinate. The data from ticket scanners has allowed Anderson to conveniently review the past five Super Bowls to assess when people arrive at stadium parking lots, and in what quantity. Since checkpoints open five hours before game time — the stadium doors open four hours before the game — people could filter in by noon local time if weather conditions are pleasant.

The goal is to never keep people waiting in line during peak hours for longer than 20 minutes, although Anderson said they prefer waits take no longer than 10-15 minutes. In case people need to "go" while in line, up to 298 porta-potties dot the areas outside Cowboys Stadium.

Once ticketed fans make it inside the stadium, they can use any of the 8,000 temporary signs to find their way around. Anderson summed up the complicated nature of safely and efficiently directing people around the venue: "It's a little bit like trying to blend science and art."

Once the game ends Sunday night, Anderson doesn't exactly get to kick back and relax. He'll have to travel immediately to the Stadium Managers Conference in Huntington Beach, California, which takes place February 6-10. Then it's off to planning for the NHL's outdoor Heritage Classic in Calgary, Alberta, which is to be played Feb. 20. After that, there's the NCAA Final Four in March, the NFL Draft in New York City in April and the MLB All-Star Game in Phoenix in July. And Populous *just* completed its responsibilities at the NFL's Pro Bowl in Hawaii last week and the Denver Big Air event, a two-day ski and snowboard competition, which took place Jan. 25 and 26.

It all seems like a whirlwind of activity, but Anderson isn't fazed. He's been the coordinating architect for the last 26 Super Bowls, in addition to the myriad of worldwide sporting events he helps plan each year.

For now, his concentration is on the Super Bowl in Dallas, where he'll run one of the more complex game-day operations Populous has ever done.

"It's a pretty cool time for us," he said.

Photos: Courtesy Populous

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