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Psychedelic Emergency – Full Spectrum Integrated Harm Reduction and High-Risk Situations

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Reduse2018 – International Drug Checking Forum

Abstract

Harm Reduction services offered at Boom Festival include a range of full-spectrum interventions such as peer-to-peer information, state-of-the-art drug checking services and psychedelic emergency. Following the tragic events of 2016, when two drug-related deaths took place at the festival, we will discuss the implications these events have had to the recent Boom Festival edition and present the new strategies implemented at the festival. Also parting from the 2018 edition of Boom Festival we will present the challenges that the service was faced upon and give context concerning the approach used to deal with them. We will finally discuss a range of factors that are likely to influence the ability to deal with high-risk situations (for health and for mental health) from the perspective of what is possible and what is not possible to control at these types of settings.

Boom Festival

Since 1997

Over 33 000/152 countries (2016); around 37 000/140 countries

Biannual large-scale electronic dance music festival

Independent culture and multidisciplinary artistic expression

Strong values (humanism, sustainability, equality)

“No logo” policy

High investment in care of partygoers

Several international awards in the field of sustainability

Kosmicare at Boom but also Utopia (2014), Be-In (2015) – up to present only Good Mood, Lda Events.

2002

Liminal Village hosted an information stand about drugs and harm reduction for the first time at Boom

2004

Kosmikiva (promoted by MAPS). First time offered “psychedelic emergency services” at Boom

2006-2008

Kosmicare (promoted by MAPS); Drug-Checking services offered at Boom (Energy Control/Spain and Check-In APDES)

2010

Kosmicare Project Partnership (Good Mood,lda, Catholic University of Portugal, SICAD/Portuguese Government). Kosmicare Research Project. Drug checking services (Check-In/APDES and EU funded projects)

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eyes on the stars feet on the ground

2016 - 2018

Kosmicare Association (Psychedelic Emergency + Drug Checking & Info Hub)

Harm Reduction Regulation

2001 Decree-Law that regulates risk prevention and damage minimization policies

Drug-checking services included:

Contact and informaiton services can offer information regarding an illegal PAS composition, especially in the case of synthetic substances, at environments known for its use.

Information stands equiped with testing devices for chemical analysis can be offered to compensate for the lack of knowledge and information about a PAS by its user.

Portuguese Government/SICAD issues a permit for the conduciton of Drug Checking activities every edition.

Kosmicare's presence at the festival evolved

Kosmicare Psychedelic Emergency

2018/N=355 cases

Team Structure (2018)

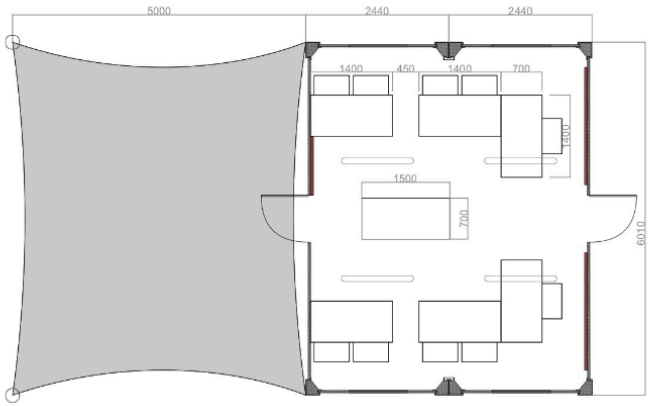
Psychedelic Emergency

- Coordination Team (3)
- Builders (2)
- Medical Backup Team/psychiatrists (5)
- Medical Backup Team/Nurses (2)
- Team Leaders (5)
- Secretaries (10)
- Sitters (66)

What changed in 2018?

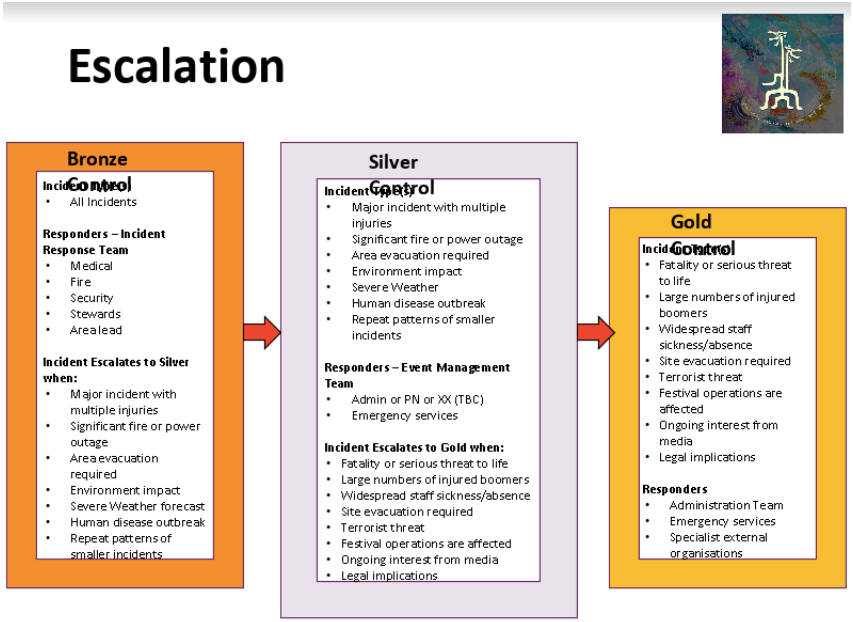
- Creation of an event control room

Layout



What changed in 2018?

- Communication of emergencies classified with a color protocol



What changed in 2018?

- Creation of a new stewards team following the principles of situational awareness

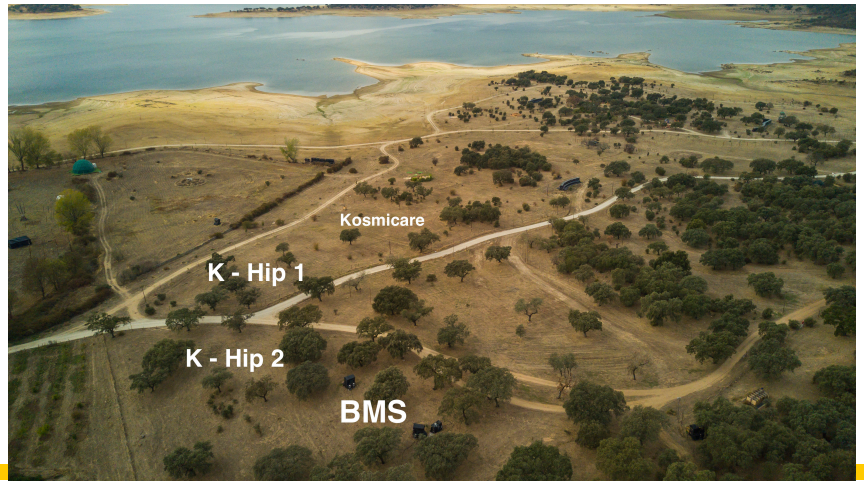
Situational Awareness and Information Management in an Incident/Crisis

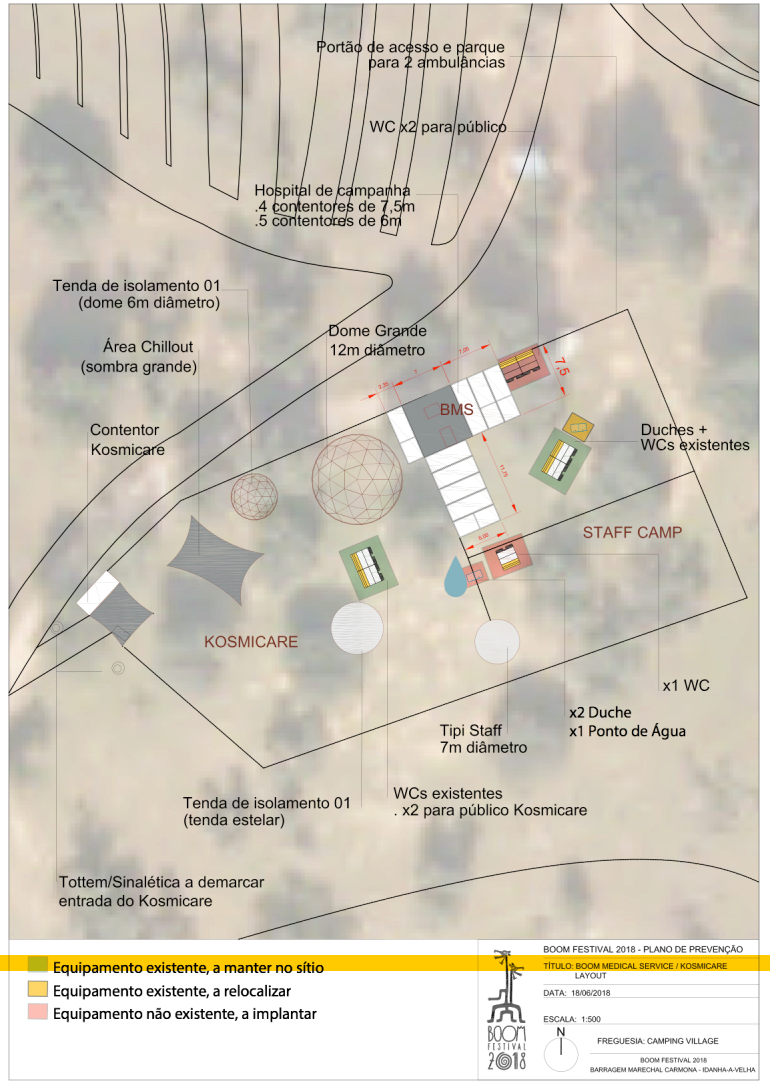
Bev Osborne

Boom Festival Steward Coordinator

What changed in 2018?

- Change in Kosmicare Psychedelic Emergency Location





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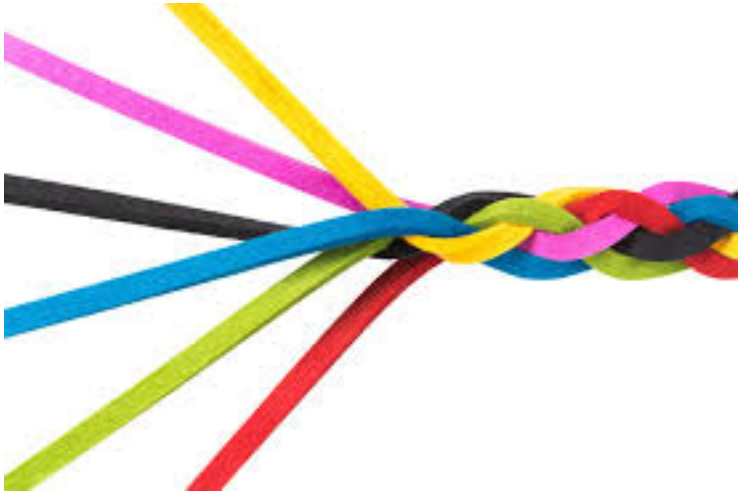
What changed in 2018?

- Creation of 2 advanced posts

Aditionally:

- Close cooperation with:
  - Boom medical Services
  - Firefighters
  - Peace Keepers



Kosmicare Psychedelic Emergency 2018

Tipology for of high-risk cases	N (%)
Total cases	355 (100%)
Medical and psychiatric evaluation	53 (15%)
Administered pharmaceuticals	22 (6%)
Evacuation to an outside hospital unit	5 (1,4%)
Evacuated by family/significant others	3 (<1%)

What guidelines are available?

Psycho-spiritual emergence

Psycho-spiritual emergency

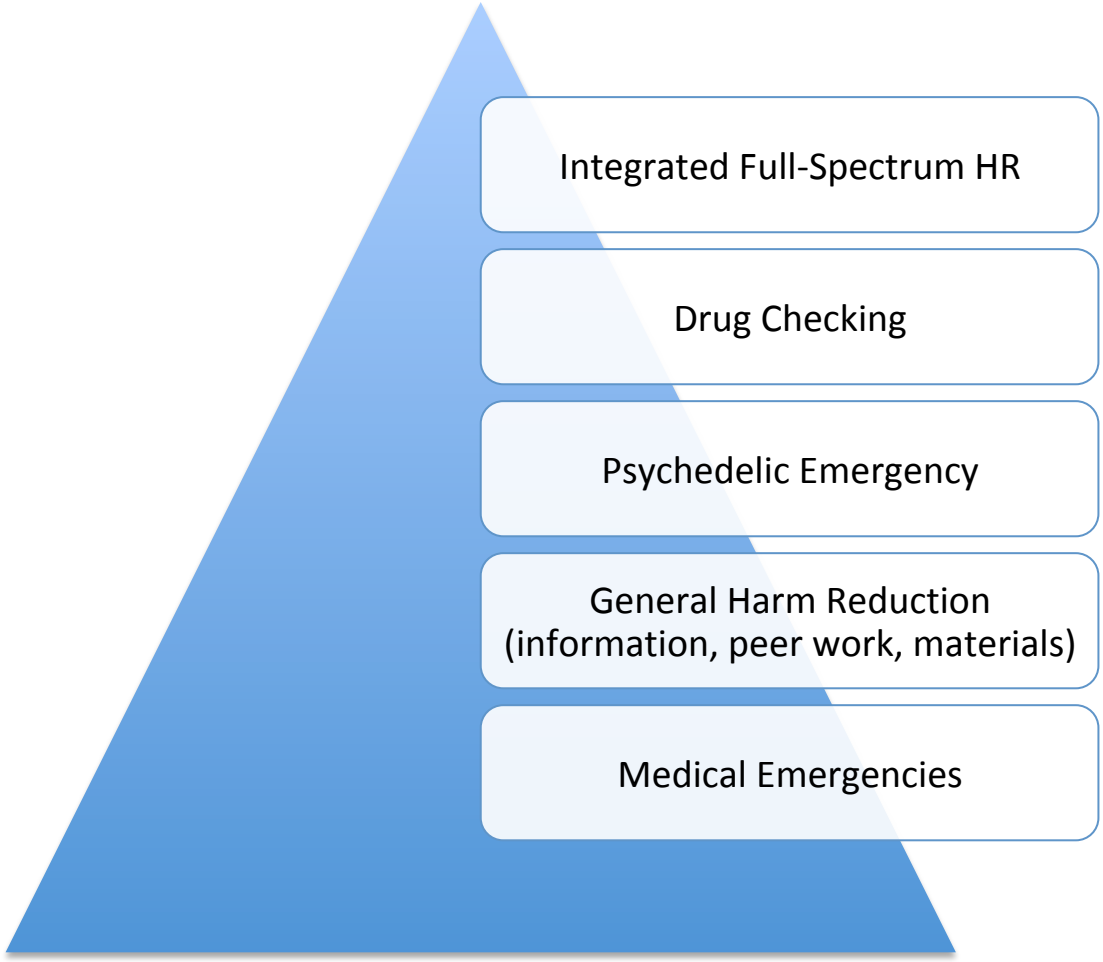
Psychedelic emergency/ challenging psychedelic experience

High-risk psychedelic emergencies

"The difficult LSD experience, **unless it results from a gross abuse of the individual**, represents an exteriorization of a potentially pathogenic matrix in the subjects' unconscious" (Grof, 2008, p.309)

"Episodes of non-ordinary states of consciousness cover a very wide spectrum, from purely spiritual states without any pathological features to conditions that are clearly biological in nature and require medical treatment"; "**there is danger to spiritualizing psychotic states and glorifying pathology or, even worse, overlooking an organic problem**" (Grof & Grof, 1989, p. 13).

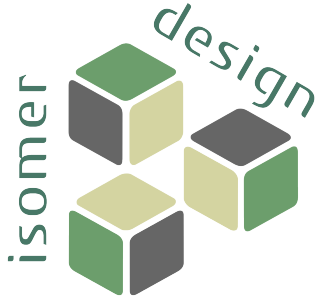
What might be the key to manage high-risk situations in psychedelic emergency…



High-Risk situations − serious lack of support/ protocols for informed safety decisions

- Guidance is coming from psychedelic psychotherapya − not from uncontrolled settings of psychactive/psychedelic use.
- Almost no case description. It could be most challenging situaitons described in literature are our most common ones
- The benefits transpersonal psychology believes may be encoutered by not interfering with the experience are to be met if safety and setting are controled. Not the case in our case... Does this mean there's no benefits?...
- How to recognize and handle high-risk? What criteria to define psychosis? Those are missing. But there's mental health risk and plain health risk! (heat, mad cocktaisl, overdosing...)
- Pharmaceuticals are demonized..."Never interrupt the psychedelic emergency" - What if you risk life in the process?... Or if you let psychosis left untreated for too long?
- Transpersonal psychology suggests, If interference is required, use psychostymulants and psychedelics; in alternative, ketamine, metilphenidate... No protocols here, though... And in an uncontrolled environment, no knowledge of previous substances used, no backgrond info...

Acknowledgements



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PSYCHEDELIC EMERGENCY HUB

Thank you for your attention!

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