



ags expo  
SERVICES

# GETTING BACK TO EVENTS

A PLANNER'S RESOURCE GUIDE  
TO TRADE SHOWS & EVENTS  
AFTER COVID-19



*To Our Event Partners,*

*AGS Expo Services has researched and identified key areas to be considered when planning and producing a safe and healthy event in the COVID-19 era. Our goal is to provide you with the most current information available from facilities and authorities across the United States.*

*During this research, AGS contacted more than 20 venues, food and beverage providers and transportation companies to access possible guidelines and regulations. We can all expect that mandates and policies will evolve over time and will differ across the country.*

*We are all interested in making live events secure and successful. Your input and suggestions for adding details is welcome, and we look forward to working with you on your shows very soon!*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darren Green", positioned below the portrait.

**Darren Green**

CEO AGS Exposition Services

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## Safety

Below are some safety considerations and suggestions for show managers when producing a show. Protocols will change and adjust over time and as government mandates take effect.

### Recommendations for Show Management

- Consider having everyone on site - employees, attendees, exhibitors, sponsors, volunteers, media, partners - sign a waiver stating that they are attending your event at their own risk, and that neither the venue, the organizer, nor any other attendees are responsible if they get sick with coronavirus or anything else around the time of your event.
- Enact Health screening checks for all attendees at the show
  - Designate a check-in area to screen for symptoms and temperatures before entering the convention space. This would be a mandatory step for all attendees, exhibitors and staff at the beginning of the conference and would be required before picking up their badge.
    - If reliable rapid testing exists by the time of your show, this may be an additional step you want to include (in partnership with a certified, licensed, and approved third-party medical organization).
    - A laser testing technology (diffractive phase interferometry) is currently being developed as a non-invasive way to detect the coronavirus within infected blood as soon as the infection takes hold, and the process takes a few seconds to deliver results. This could be a more accurate testing method than current thermal imaging devices and could be rolled out in the next few months. We will continue to monitor the efficacy and progress of this technology.
  - Attendees would not have to submit to the full health screening each day, but they would have to submit to a daily temperature check.
  - If antibody tests and immunity certification procedures are available at the time of your event, consider offering optional antibody testing/immunity certification to your attendees. This would enable, in theory, some attendees to have greater freedom of movement. Attendees who already possess a valid immunity certification and are able to produce it at your event would be exempt from COVID-19 testing as well as all other screening requirements. Registered attendees who are certified as immune would receive a special badge making it obvious to all other attendees that they possess a valid immunity certification.
- Provide a quarantine/isolation room where people suspected to have COVID-19 (for instance as a result of a health screening check or simply staff feeling ill at work) can be brought to while they wait for a doctor or a hospital/test transport
  - Use a separate room, preferably away from open crowded areas sealable with a door (to keep others away while a doctor or ambulance is being summoned)
  - Preferably, have the ability to turn off the ventilation in the room so no other areas are potentially contaminated by air
  - Keep a staff member present at the door to keep others out while the room is in use
  - Have a designated toilet near the isolation room that the person in question can use, but which can then be closed off so others do not use it

- Have a room decontamination/cleaning protocol at the ready for after the person in question has left
- Check to ensure you do not have staff working an isolation room who may have a pre-existing condition, and who may be more susceptible to contracting the virus

### Show Management Published Policies & Safety Considerations

- Post a checklist on the cleaning procedures of the facility and show management listing:
  - Type of cleaners used
  - Schedule of cleaning
    - Registration counters should be cleaned and disinfected between each customer
- Ensure that the staff are visible to attendees when cleaning
- Post on your website and communicate to your attendees and exhibitors how show management plans to control access to the event
  - Include any event cancellation clauses and sign notices, if required for safety
  - Send out notices to exhibitors and attendees informing them of what policies the facility and AGS have enacted to keep people safe
- Set policies on how attendees should interact both with the event and with each other

### Show Management Recommendations for Exhibitors

- Throw out all remaining marketing materials which may have been left exposed on a table or publicly accessible surfaces OR isolate all marketing materials and hand out only on an AS-NEEDED basis
- Offer a QR-based downloadable repository of marketing materials – just scan their badge and send
- Prohibit the use of candy bowls or other giveaways that carry the risk of cross-contamination

## Facility Mapping & Planning

This section will take you through specific recommendations for each area of your event and will include items and procedures that will be built into your floorplan to ensure you are following safe social distancing guidelines.

### Registration Area

- Provide mask distribution for all attendees, exhibitors, and show personnel either at the health screening checkpoint or at registration
- Enforce advance or pre-registration and utilize self-serve scanner stations to avoid long lines/waiting pools
  - You may need to add additional stations to your registration area to keep the lines at a minimum



- If available through your registration provider, consider offering “no touch” paper badge printers at each station so that the badge is only touched by the attendee
- Add plexi barriers at each desk for any onsite registration interaction
- Place hand sanitizer stations throughout the registration space – touchless units are ideal
- Consider providing additional personal hand sanitizers to each attendee, either with their badge or in a welcome bag. These can be a sponsorship opportunity for your exhibitors
- Utilize line management similar to what grocery stores do now – place markers every 6 feet within queue lines to encourage safe social distancing
- Options for pens and paper:
  - Removal of pens and paper from your registration area altogether
  - Disposable one-time use sleeves for pens
  - Sanitize pens after each use
  - Provide a pen in your welcome bags and encourage attendees to use their provided pen exclusively

### Lobby and Prefunction Areas

- Have hand sanitizer stations placed throughout the lobby and other spaces where attendee congregation typically takes place – touchless units are ideal
- Provide safe zones where attendees know the surfaces have been cleaned after the last person sat there
  - To accomplish this, you may need to have a lounge attendant who is constantly cleaning and disinfecting the surfaces in the area
  - Adjust the seating in these areas to enable attendees to sit while maintaining safe social distancing. Remove seating options that encourage multiple people sitting together, like benches or couches and replace with individual chairs
- Incorporate a health screening area at any event ingress point as mentioned in the section above. This would ideally be before registration near the main entrance to your event space. Do not allow ingress at other unmonitored points

### Exhibit Hall

- Reduce the total number of attendees allowed in the hall at once
  - To accomplish this, stagger hall admission so attendees receive a time slot to enter the exhibit hall
    - This can either be done on its own or in conjunction with staggered end times and breaks between open times to allow for hall disinfection
  - Shift the exhibit hall schedule
    - Hall open to 50 at a time, with multiple hall sessions
    - Scheduled Exhibitor sessions
- Offer contactless sharing of information – you can share contact info by RFID or through your event app instead of business cards
- Handshakes and other forms of contact greetings are discouraged, so make light of this situation by providing a distanced networking opportunity: allow exhibitors and attendees to choose their

favorite form of distance greetings during registration to be printed on their badge or given as a sticker with supporting signage throughout the spaces explaining the different greeting types, such as a namaste bow, an air high-five, the Vulcan salute, or two thumbs up like the Fonz in Happy Days. The more creative your list of greeting types, the more fun it will be!

- Social distancing within a booth: as the organizer, consider providing them with some extra space to help spread out (i.e.: 10' x 12' inline booths to accommodate for two staff members, etc.)
  - Limit the total number of exhibitor staff allowed at one time in a booth

## General and Education Sessions

Below are a few suggestions for social distancing in your general and education sessions. We recommend that you work with your facility contact to follow their specific rules and regulations regarding meeting rooms.

- Rooms should be set at reduced capacity to maintain 6 feet of distance between each attendee.
  - Based on this distancing, you can expect a capacity **decrease** percentage for the following room sets:
    - Theater: 67% Decrease
    - Classroom: 50% Decrease
    - Banquet: 40% Decrease
  - Examples of potential room sets: [Hyatt Regency Bloomington Social Distancing Examples](#)
- Consider entry and exit points as they relate to flow of attendees and place signage accordingly
- Add additional time between sessions to allow for room disinfection and resetting
- Replace table linens after each use or consider removing table linens altogether. Your options will depend on the type and condition of the tables available in each facility
- Place individual bottled water in lieu of water carafes on meeting tables and water stations
- Note pads and pens should be removed and replaced after each session, or forego placing them at all
- Keynote and larger educational sessions may need to be broadcast remotely while still offering the opportunity for attendees to ask questions
  - Partner hotels may be able to provide a dedicated channel in each hotel room to broadcast the education sessions
  - If possible, modify your schedule to allow for the session to be repeated live three times for all to attend live over the course of your event
- Discourage demos or “show and tell” pieces in the sessions where multiple people are in contact with the same item

## Catering Services and F&B Offerings

Below are a few suggestions for food & beverage offerings. We recommend that you work with your catering contact to follow their specific rules and regulations regarding food and beverage in the facility.

- Food and beverage may need to be all pre-packaged and handed out by an attendant which then would require sanitary and socially distanced places to consume. Disposable plates and single use cups (if required) will also need to be handed out by an attendant. Use pre-packaged silverware and wrapped straws
  - Small café tables with single seats or cocktail rounds spaced 6 feet apart is ideal for this
  - Stagger cocktail tables to allow people to chat and be distanced
- You will need additional staff to manage physical distancing at entries and queues (in addition to signage)
- Stagger lunch pickup times to allow for adequate cleaning and disinfection of all communal spaces (pickup stations, tables, seating, etc.) between times
- Place small pick-up stations throughout the exhibit hall so there are no large groups waiting – this also promotes people moving around the hall
  - Boxed lunches
  - Carry-away pre-packaged breakfast
- Time to get creative with your food and beverage director! Create fun and entertaining action stations with additional staffing for security

### Offsite or After-Hours Networking Events and Venues

Everyone will need to get creative for events meant to be for networking. The ability to test and pass individuals prior to entry would allow for more freedom of interaction. The ability to know if this is possible will not be known for another 6 to 8 weeks. In the meantime, here are a few ideas for these types of events:

- From individual hotel rooms within the host hotel:
  - Host a "virtual networking party"
    - Have the hotel deliver a bottle of beer/wine/soft drinks + a cheese plate/light snack to each guest room 30 minutes before the designated networking time (you could ask people what their preferences would be on a registration form, especially if you have guests who prefer not to drink alcohol, are allergic to dairy, etc.)
    - In your online conferencing platform (Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc.), create pre-assigned breakout rooms with 4-5 attendees in each room. Each networking group would have 10 – 15 minutes to chat before being put in another breakout room with different people. Repeat this X number of times
- Open Networking Spaces
  - There is much to consider for a networking reception: the amount of people that are "free to roam", how people access food and drink safely, the ability to connect informally without too many restraints, etc.
    - Host a "Twister Reception" (referring to the board/floor game "Twister") with colors to direct your next move. Masks could be used to designate color possibly, with some being multi-colored.
      - The guests would be permitted to choose their color which could be associated with varying degrees of exposure/interaction to allow them



to determine their level of interaction. 'Green' guests are willing to interact with more people, 'Red' guests are not

- Subsequently, it would be a tiered networking event giving those that choose limited exposure to network with like-minded, more cautious attendees, providing a sense of security and appreciation for their level of comfort. Certain areas of the room would be designated by colors.
- Every server/staff member is assigned a color to designate their food station and essentially the only people they will be in contact with ('green' guests would be served by only 'green' staff whether they pass pre-packaged hors d'oeuvres or serve from the 'green' area, 'red' guests are served by only 'red' staff, etc.)
- Network with electronic badge technology where you can share contact information
- Remove all "open" food and drinks
- Adjust to smaller areas for seating with distance between all of 6 feet – length and width

## Transportation

Interviews with Convention Transportation companies conducted this week show that most will be following these rules:

- Buses will be required to provide 6 feet between each person – this is in both width and length.
  - For a 56-passenger bus – you will have between 15 and 20 people allowed
  - This is about 30% of the bus
  - Minibuses present even a bigger challenge due to the smaller space
- All buses are cleaned each day and between each ride. They will be using hospital grade cleaners to be sure that the buses are sanitized. They will also be providing individual hand sanitizers for each passenger
- Costs will of course be an issue for all concerned. For example, if you are moving 150 people – you would have used 3 buses. Now you will need 8 buses
  - The transportation companies know that the pricing will need to be adjusted per bus over past times. This will be a transition period for all and a time for negotiation as the new pricing models are developed

## Floorplans/Hall Layout

- 12'-15' aisles, depending on facility
- 10'x10' spaces will be staggered in a checker pattern
- Hard wall backs of booths to limit contact and airflow between booths
- One-way aisles for traffic pattern
- Markers every 6' - Opportunities for fun sponsorships with distance markings
- Hand sanitizers every row or every other row, depending on traffic pattern
- Additional space at front of hall (20' minimum) to allow for two-way traffic with left and right-side directions
- Multiple entranceways to reduce lines/congestion
- Create a table, if using ratios or percentages for FM approved occupancy totals

## AGS Expo Services Clean & Safe Events

A safe return to business means we need real change in how we create event experiences. Though we will be constantly evolving our reduction-of-harm strategy to emphasize clean and safe event spaces, we are actively preparing for our show management, exhibiting and attendee partners' return with our new plan.

### Reduction of Harm Focuses

- Cleaning
  - Wipe down of all common surfaces w/certified cleaning solutions
  - Partnered cleaning with facilities for high-touch locations
  - Offering harm reduction focused porter service for show management & exhibitor areas
  - Exhibitor & attendee desk sneeze guard options
  - Hand sanitizer / cleaning wipe dispensers available at AGS service centers
- Site Practices
  - Masks & gloves for AGS staff, with a focus on high-touch services
  - Material unloading to be completed in a cued fashion, requesting drivers remain in their POVs/truck cabs
  - Wipe-down of shared work equipment including lifts and jacks
  - Providing strong guidance for EAC participation in conjunction with Show Management reduction of harm guidance
  - Service manual updates/notices for exhibitors including care considerations for their booth spaces and their EAC staff
- AGS Inventory Care
  - Equipment will be wiped down upon return to inventory
  - Cleaning of high-use soft goods; drapes, skirts, and carpet cleaning between events

### A Dedicated Team

AGS has built a leadership team solely focused on our safe return to business strategy, led by Evan Garvey, Executive Vice President over operations; Kim Sackett, Strategic Business Solutions Leader; Melissa Minkler, Director of Client Management and Charles Sparano, Event Productions Leader for Cleaning Services.



Evan Garvey



Kim Sackett



Melissa Minkler



Charles Sparano

Our team will:

- Coordinate, communicate, and help update guidelines and implement strategies for reduction of harm
- Work with clients and facilities to ensure our plans dovetail into existing cleaning and reduction of harm strategies
- Develop and train both fulltime and temporary staff around reduction of harm and cleaning procedures

AGS understands that cleaning and harm reduction guidance related to SARS-CoV-2/ COVID-19 is constantly evolving. As a result, the methods noted above will be re-evaluated and adjusted as new guidance is prescribed by leading industry and national authorities.

### Additional Facility Safety Guidelines

As facilities release their own health and safety guidelines, we will add them to this list. AGS will adhere to all additional guidelines as recommended by each facility. In some cases, this may require additional changes to the planning process.

## Products

Below is a list of products for you to consider adding to your event. Many of these items can be sold as sponsorship opportunities for your exhibitors.

### PPE / Personal Protective Equipment

- Branded or sponsored masks
- Bulk plain masks
- Gloves
- Personal bottles of hand sanitizer (alcohol content at least 70%)
- Cleaning Solutions and disinfecting wipes

### Signage

- Awareness banner stands
- Floor clings
- Aisle Directions
- Posters with “COVID Awareness” messages. AGS can provide you with a selection of available messages and options.
- Custom Aisle Directionals (One way! Wrong Way!)

## Lounges

- Secured areas of engagement
  - Themed and fun with placement of furniture that meets the guidelines
  - Games that can be done with separation
  - Cleaning Stations for tech – phone sanitizers - wipes and UV– theme and sponsored

## Storage for Exhibitor Giveaways

- Enhanced storage areas with cleaning/sanitizing of the giveaways
  - Certified clean stickers

## Links and Additional Resources

### Health & Safety Organizations

- CDC Guidelines and Resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
  - Gatherings and Community Events: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html>
- World Health Organization (WHO) Resources: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

### Recommendations from Industry Associations

- Go LIVE Together Industry Resources: <https://www.golivetogether.com/covid-19-resources>
- American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) Safe Stay Guidelines: <https://www.ahla.com/safestay>
- ESCA Health & Safety Guidelines: <https://www.esca.org/wp-content/uploads/ESCA-Health-Safety-Guidance-for-the-Exhibitions-Industry.pdf>
- IACC COVID-19 Venue Re-opening Resources: <http://www.iacconline.org/iacc-venue-re-opening>
- IAEE COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.iaee.com/covid19/>
- PCMA Resources & Insights: [https://www.pdma.org/coronavirus-business-events-professionals-need-to-know-faq/?utm\\_medium=top-cta&utm\\_source=pdma\\_homepage&utm\\_campaign=covid-19](https://www.pdma.org/coronavirus-business-events-professionals-need-to-know-faq/?utm_medium=top-cta&utm_source=pdma_homepage&utm_campaign=covid-19)
- MPI Coronavirus Tools & Resources: <https://www.mpi.org/tools/coronavirus>

### Hotels

- Caesar's Entertainment: Will be releasing their full plan at a later date. In the meantime, they are recommending 3' of space between each booth and 12' aisles. There are no restrictions in place regarding booth capacity or one-way aisles. They are encouraging all guests to practice social distancing and have guests on a flow throughout each booth. Restrictions are subject to change at any time due to city, state and federal authorities' guidelines and mandates.
- Gaylord Hotels: <http://gaylordhotelsclean.com/>
- Hilton CleanStay: <https://newsroom.hilton.com/corporate/news/hilton-defining-new-standard-of-cleanliness>
- Hyatt Global Care & Cleanliness Commitment: <https://www.hyatt.com/info/global-care-and-cleanliness-commitment>
- Marriott Cleanliness Council: <https://clean.marriott.com/?nck=202532821&ck=49714041&lk=1000411969>
- MGM Resorts Seven-Point Safety Plan: <https://www.mgmresorts.com/en/covid-19/seven-point-safety-plan.html>
- Omni Hotels & Resorts Safe & Clean Program: <https://www.omnihotels.com/omni-safe-and-clean>



- Rosen Hotels & Resorts Total Commitment Program:  
<https://www.rosenhotels.com/rosentotalcommitment/>

## Convention Centers

Links to resources from convention centers will be added here as they are announced.

- The Fort Worth Convention Center has released a PDF file of their health and safety guidelines as of June 10, 2020. Please contact your Account Manager for the latest information.
- The Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland has released a PDF file of their COVID safety efforts. Please contact your Account Manager for the latest information.
- Orange County Convention Center: <http://occc.net/Coronavirus>
- Savannah Convention Center: <https://www.savconventioncenter.com/returnplan/>

## Cities, States and CVB/CVA Recommendations

Links to resources from cities, states and CVB/CVAs will be added here as they are announced.

- Kansas City, MO: <https://kcconvention.com/city-of-kcmo-covid-19-updates/>
- Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority: <https://www.visitlasvegas.com/vegas-smart/>

## Further Reading & Listening

- Podcast: Why a Healthy Security Plan is Critical for a Return to Meetings:  
[https://www.northstarmetingsgroup.com/Podcasts/The-Eventful-Podcast/health-security-plan-podcast?oly\\_enc\\_id=9341H5898412D5T](https://www.northstarmetingsgroup.com/Podcasts/The-Eventful-Podcast/health-security-plan-podcast?oly_enc_id=9341H5898412D5T)



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