Planning for COVID-19

Know your show

IAEE conducted a [webinar](#) regarding event cancellation policies and insurance, including an important discussion about force majeure, including clause definitions and what to look for in your contracts.

Know the facts

It is imperative to turn to official sources such as the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and [World Health Organization](#) for the facts. These organizations update their websites regularly. IAEE also has a robust [coronavirus resource section](#) on its website.

The CDC overview: "About COVID-19" https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html

Tools you can use

CDC has prepared helpful visuals and posters in multiple languages that you can print and display: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html

CDC provides a guide specifically for event planners about what to do before an outbreak, actions to take during an outbreak and how to follow up after an outbreak in your community. The text below highlights what to do before an outbreak.

Before a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community: Plan

Officials may ask you to modify, postpone, or cancel large events for the safety and well-being of your event staff, participants, and the community. The details of your emergency operations plan should be based on the size and duration of your events, demographics of the participants, complexity of your event operations, and type of on-site services and activities your event may offer.

Review the existing emergency operations plans for your venues

Meet with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team at your venues. Discuss the emergency operations plans and determine how they may impact aspects of your events, such as personnel, security, services and activities, functions, and resources. Work with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team to prepare for the key prevention strategies outlined in this guidance. Develop a contingency plan that addresses various scenarios described below which you may encounter during a COVID-19 outbreak.

Establish relationships with key community partners and stakeholders. When forming key relationships for your events, include relevant partners such as the local public health department, community leaders, faith-based organizations, vendors, suppliers, hospitals, hotels, airlines, transportation companies, and law enforcement.

Collaborate and coordinate with them on broader planning efforts. Clearly identify each partner's role, responsibilities, and decision-making authority. Contact your local public health department for a copy of their outbreak response and mitigation plan for your community. Participate in community-wide emergency preparedness activities.

Address key prevention strategies in your emergency operations plan

Promote the daily practice of everyday preventive actions. Use health messages and materials developed by credible public health sources such as your local public health department or CDC to encourage your event staff and participants to practice good personal health habits. Promote everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, which include:

- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily.

Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies at your events. Plan to have extra supplies on hand for event staff and participants, including sinks with soap, hand sanitizers, tissues, and disposable facemasks (for persons who start having symptoms).

Note: Disposable facemasks should be kept on-site and used only if someone (worker or attendee) becomes sick at your event. Those who become sick should be immediately isolated from staff and participants who are not sick and given a clean disposable facemask to wear.

Plan for staff absences. Develop flexible attendance and sick-leave policies. Event staff need to stay home when they are sick, or they may need to stay home to care for a sick household member or care for their children in the event of school dismissals. Identify critical job functions and positions and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff (similar to planning for holiday staffing).

Promote messages that discourage people who are sick from attending events. This should include messages requesting that people leave events if they begin to have symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. They should seek medical advice promptly by calling ahead to a doctor's office or emergency room to get guidance. See CDC guidance on what to do when sick with COVID-19.

If possible, identify a space that can be used to isolate staff or participants who become ill at the event. Designate a space for staff and participants who may become sick and cannot leave the event immediately. Work with

partners, such as local hospitals, to create a plan for treating staff and participants who do not live nearby. Include a plan for separating and caring for vulnerable populations.

Plan ways to limit in-person contact for staff supporting your events. Several ways to do this include offering staff the option to telework if they can perform their job duties off-site, using email, and conducting meetings by phone or video conferencing. Reduce the number of staff needed such as staggering shifts for staff who support essential functions and services during events.

Develop flexible refund policies for participants. Create refund policies that permit participants the flexibility to stay home when they are sick, need to care for sick household members, or are at high risk for complications from COVID-19.

Identify actions to take if you need to postpone or cancel events. Work closely with local public health officials to assess local capacities in the area. During a COVID-19 outbreak, resource limitations among local healthcare systems and/or law enforcement can influence the decision to postpone or cancel your events. If possible, plan alternative ways for participants to enjoy the events by television, radio, or online.

Communicate about COVID-19

Update and distribute timely and accurate emergency communication information. Identify everyone in your chain of communication (for example, event staff, participants, suppliers, vendors, and key community partners and stakeholders) and establish systems for sharing information with them. Maintain up-to-date contact information for everyone in the chain of communication. Identify platforms, such as a hotline, automated text messaging, and a website to help disseminate information.

Identify and address potential language, cultural, and disability barriers associated with communicating COVID-19 information to event staff and participants. Information you share should be easily understood by everyone attending the events. Learn more about reaching people of diverse languages and cultures by visiting: Know Your Audience. You also can learn more about communicating to staff in a crisis at: Crisis Communication Plan.

CDC also provides guidance on what to do during an outbreak as well as after.