

Waco Convention Center Reopening Guide

DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



WACO CONVENTION CENTER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. GENERAL HEALTH & SAFETY PRECAUTIONS 4
 - HEALTH & SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR MEETING/EVENT PLANNERS 4
 - PLANNING WHEN TO REOPEN 4
 - AT RISK ATTENDEES 5
- 2. MARKETING FOR MEETING AND EVENT PLANNERS 5
- 3. STAFF HEALTH AND HYGIENE 6
- 4. SANITIZING THE VENUE 7
 - Sanitizing High-Touch Areas 7
 - Space Requirements 8
 - Temperature and Health Screening 9
 - Sanitizer Stations 9
 - Evacuation Plans 9
 - Air Ventilation 9
- 5. FRONT OF HOUSE, FOOD AND BEVERAGE, AND MERCHANDISE 10

Welcome

Thank you for selecting the Waco Convention Center for your upcoming event. The Waco Convention Center staff strives to maintain the highest level of service, professionalism and performance in the event industry.

This guide will provide all the information about the facility and help assist you through the initial planning process with most event-related issues, including, but not limited to building policies and procedures, fire safety regulations, facility specifications, and inventory.

Please stay in contact with your designated salesperson. Our dedicated sales staff is ready to assist you with your entire event planning needs in order to make your event a success from start to finish.

There is no guarantee of an illness-free event even if you follow everything in this *Reopening Guide*. It is indisputable, however, that planning, training, and implementing reasonable health and safety measures are the best ways to protect live events and the people who create them, while also inspiring patrons to return to the places where we make magic happen.

1. GENERAL HEALTH & SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

The Waco Convention Center's top priority is the safety of its guests, employees, and all who pass through our doors. Although we are currently closed, we wanted to let you know the measures we are taking to respond to the issue of COVID-19. Currently, we adhere to the CDC guidelines as well as to guidance from the Waco- McLennan County Public Health District, and Gov. Abbott's "Plan to Open Texas."

Some of the key points are as follows:

- Our staff wears face coverings at all times when working among the public
- Our staff sanitizes high-touch zones **three** times daily. These areas include handrails, door handles (both interior and exterior), bathroom surfaces, and escalator/elevator
- Hand sanitizing stations are located at key points in the building
- We practice social distancing
- Staff temperatures are checked everyday
- Plexiglass shields are present in the reception office to protect staff and guests/ attendees

HEALTH & SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR MEETING/EVENT PLANNERS

When the WACO CONVENTION CENTER is allowed to host events again, we are prepared to work individually with our meeting and event planners to develop plans and procedures specific to each event. Key guidelines are as follows:

- Social distancing must be adhered to while in the facility
- Room sets will be set for social distancing only
- No same day room changes will be permitted
- Meeting and event planners must observe health and safety guidelines at all times
- Sanitizing stations will be available
- Temperature testing stations will be available
- The event organizer will decide whether to require face coverings of attendees, and if so, he/she would supply these

PLANNING WHEN TO REOPEN

WHEN APPROVED AND APPROPRIATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATE AND LOCAL GUIDELINES

If small events and venues can reopen without increasing COVID-19 transmission rates, it will open the door for progressively larger spaces to implement similar measures on a larger scale in the future. If, on the other hand, the first attempt at a safe reopening incurs increased infections, that would set back the entire event industry. As much as we are all

eager to get back to work, the decision when and how to reopen must be driven by a realistic assessment of one's ability to resume operations safely. Staff will work to ensure all aspects of the State and Local Executive Orders are upheld. Staff will also make every effort to remain current as orders change/evolve. Lastly, the safety of our attendees and staff will remain the priority throughout these times. If unsafe practices are taking place, the Waco Convention Center management reserves the right to close the event down with no refunds issued.

AT RISK ATTENDEES

COVID-19 is a new disease and there is limited information regarding risk factors for severe disease. Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, **older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions** might be a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

- Stay home if possible.
- Wash your hands often.
- Maintain 6ft distancing
- Minimize face-to-face contact with others.
- Keep away from people who are sick.
- Avoid non-essential travel.

For more information regarding high risk individuals please visit www.cdc.gov

2. MARKETING FOR MEETING AND EVENT PLANNERS

“We’re all in this together” describes the essential role patrons play in allowing live events to reopen safely. Because COVID-19 is highly contagious, everyone must do their part. This section focuses on ways to maximize health and safety compliance and minimize disruption of the event.

Where to Message. In a word, *everywhere*. Here are some ways to reach patrons before they arrive at your point of ingress.

- **Website** for the venue, event, or artist. The more prominently new rules and expectations are displayed, the more serious businesses appear about enforcing them, which will tend to gain greater compliance.
- **Social media channels** for the venue, event or artist. As with the web site, the more information appears on social media, the greater its impact.
- **Emails and push notifications** reminding patrons of health rules and expectations can be sent at regular intervals from date of purchase through day of show.
- **Mobile apps** are already valuable means of giving patrons directions to the venue, show times, artist bios, and merchandise options. You can add health rules and expectations to the information on every patron's phone.

- **Signage** leading to and at the event site can be effective as a further reminder, especially if it is visually attractive and located where patrons are likely to be standing still or moving slowly. Physical signs are particularly important for ticketless events or where young participants will be brought by their parents.

How to Message. With a goal as broad as normalizing and gaining buy-in for new rules, any method that works is good. Here are a few suggestions.

- **Marketing staff** can use their creative talent to promote health guidance without being intimidating.
- **Photos and videos** can show patrons having a good time even while following health rules, such as attractive people wearing stylish face coverings over their nose and mouth.
- **Storyboards** can show how a venue is sanitized so patrons understand the process and personalize the workers keeping them safe.
- **Announcements** should be both audible and visual to accommodate people with sensory challenges and different language skills.
- **Speakers** can use their authority with attendees to remind them that only their full compliance allows the convention to continue.

3. STAFF HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Because COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus with insufficient testing and no vaccine, workers and volunteers must diligently address the health risks of working in the close confines of many event spaces.

Practices for Healthy Workers and Volunteers

- a. **Social Distancing.** Public health guidance stresses that whenever possible, everyone should leave at least six feet to the person closest to them. Where a task cannot be accomplished working alone, workers can limit their exposure by forming a “work team” in which people routinely work together, but they keep their distance from everyone else.
- b. **Hand Washing.** Frequent hand washing with soap is vital to help combat the spread of any virus. When a sink is available, workers should wash their hands for twenty seconds at least every 60 minutes, and dry thoroughly with a disposable towel or dryer. As a backup, workers may use sanitizer containing at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol when a sink is not available. Workers should also wash their hands at the beginning and end of each shift and break, after using the restroom, sneezing, touching their face, blowing their nose, cleaning, sweeping, mopping, smoking, eating, or drinking.
- c. **Face Coverings.** Physical respiratory protection such as a cloth face covering should be worn whenever people are within six feet of each other because (a) COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets and (b) a significant number of infected people

will show no outward symptoms of illness. Face covering requirements should be task-specific and include instruction on proper use. Our staff wears face coverings at all times when working among the public.

- Wash your hands before putting on a face covering.
 - Put the same side against your face each time to avoid wearing the “contaminated side” against your nose and mouth.
 - Remove your face covering using the straps to avoid touching the part that protects your face.
 - Wash cloth face coverings after each use and wear other masks only according to the manufacturer’s specifications.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”).** For workers, PPE to minimize the risk of exposure to coronavirus is as necessary as it is for patrons. Employers should ensure that in addition to face coverings, workers and volunteers have the appropriate PPE for their work, and that vendors and independent contractors provide and use their own.
 - **Temperature Screening.** Temperature testing stations will be available and should be adhered to. Anyone displaying a temperature over 100.4 F (38.0 C) should be taken to a private area for a secondary temperature screening. Workers confirmed to have a higher temperature should be denied entry and directed to appropriate medical care.
 - **Touching Your Face.** Workers should avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth. Microphones, headphones, and other personal equipment should not be shared, and should be sanitized before and after each use.
 - **Cough and Sneeze Etiquette.** Workers should cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue, or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available, followed by thorough handwashing.

4. SANITIZING THE VENUE

Sanitizing High-Touch Areas

Surfaces and objects that are touched frequently, such as the ones listed below, will be regularly disinfected using products approved by the applicable health authority.

a. Public Areas

- Door handles, handrails, push plates
- Bike rack or other barricades the public may touch
- Handrails for stairs, ramps, and escalators
- Elevator buttons – inside and out
- Escalator handrails (on the hour)
- Reception desks and ticket counters

- Telephones, Point of Sale terminals, and other keypads
- Tables and chairs, including highchairs and booster seats
- Beverage stations, water fountains, vending and ice machines
- Trash receptacle touch points
- **Restrooms** (front and back of house as well as portable units)
 - Door handles and push plates
 - Sink faucets and counters, and toilet handles
 - Lids of containers for disposal of women’s sanitary products
 - Soap dispensers and towel dispenser handles
 - Baby changing stations
- **Back of House Offices, Dressing Areas, Green Rooms, Production Areas**
 - Individual office and other room furniture
 - Door handles, push plates, doorways, railings
 - Light switches and thermostats
 - Cabinet handles
 - Telephones, computers, other keypads, mouse
 - Microphones
 - Backstage and technical equipment
 - Trash receptacle touch points
- **Cleaning and Disinfecting**
 - **Cleaning** removes dirt and impurities from surfaces and objects and may lower germ counts by removing not necessarily killing them.
 - **Disinfecting** reduces and kills germs on surfaces and objects.
Because disinfecting does not necessarily
 - **Cleaning Technique.** Clean high-touch areas by using water and soap or cleaning solution to remove dirt and impurities from surfaces, objects and reduce germ counts.

Space Requirements

In order to comply with current social distancing requirements, additional space will be required to accommodate longer but less densely packed lines waiting to enter the venue.

- b. **How Much Space.** In a six-foot social distancing model, up to 36 square feet per person in unrelated family groups will be necessary.

Note. The goal of maintaining six feet between people would become a distant secondary consideration if there is a clear and imminent danger requiring an emergency evacuation. Even during this pandemic, emergency egress plans should reflect that moving patrons away from the most urgent hazard is the first order of

business.

Temperature and Health Screening

Once patrons reach the front of the line outside the venue, there should be a new screening process. Once patrons reach the front of the line outside the venue, there should be a new screening process. Testing stations will be available throughout the building.

Sanitizer Stations

There will be sanitizing stations available throughout the building.

Evacuation Plans

WACO CONVENTION CENTER staff members are trained in how to handle evacuation of the facility. In the event that emergency evacuation needs to be implemented, facility users must be aware of the following:

- c. The decision for emergency evacuation of patrons is to be made only by WACO CONVENTION CENTER Management.
- d. WACO CONVENTION CENTER Management will make the emergency telephone call to the fire and police department.
- e. WACO CONVENTION CENTER staff will issue evacuation instructions for all patrons.

Air Ventilation

Dedicated Outdoor Air System (DOAS)

The Waco Convention Center is equipped with a dedicated outdoor air system (DOAS). The DOAS is an HVAC unit that is installed outside and is often used with other HVAC equipment. DOAS units bring fresh outside air into interior spaces independently from heating or cooling efforts. City of Waco Facilities Department currently manages and maintains all cleaning/maintenance of the Waco Convention Center HVAC.

What Are the Benefits of a Dedicated Outdoor Air System (DOAS)?

While dedicated outdoor air systems could help businesses comply with new commercial HVAC energy efficiency standards, there are a host of other benefits as well:

- They improve indoor air quality by removing contaminants from outdoor air before channeling it into a building.
- DOAS units are effective dehumidifiers, and they help prevent moisture-related problems like sick building syndrome and mold growth.
- Decoupling ventilation from air heating and cooling can also lead to energy savings.

5. FRONT OF HOUSE, FOOD AND BEVERAGE, AND MERCHANDISE

Food and Beverage Service. Safe service of food and beverages presents many operational challenges, but many are likely within the ability of even smaller events and venues.

Catering. In-house catering services will not be made available during this time. Catering services will only be through an outside approved caterer. Not providing in-house catering as an option will keep expenses associated with catering events at a minimum. No purchase of food for resale or additional labor would be needed for the outside catering option. This will also ensure that Waco Convention Catering Department staff is able to fulfill bar services, as needed.

- Outside caterer will only be able to offer prepackaged or plated meals. No Buffet options will be permitted at this time.

Bar Hygiene. Bartenders should model safe behavior by wearing a face covering. Garnishes should be prepared in a central location like the kitchen and provided with tongs to bartenders, or they should be eliminated entirely. Patrons should hold their own identification for bartender inspection. If a worker must handle a patron's ID, they should wash and sanitize their hands before resuming service.

- Utensils. To replace individual eating utensils, patrons can be provided pre-wrapped cutlery and straws must be provided.
- Condiments. Condiments should be served with food orders or only at patrons' request, in disposable single-use packages must be provided.

In Conclusion:

Staff would work to ensure all aspects of the State and Local Executive Orders are upheld. Staff will make every effort to remain current as orders change/evolve. Lastly, the safety of our attendees and staff will remain the priority throughout these times. If unsafe practices are taking place, the WCC management reserves the right to close the event down with no refunds issued.