

# **Fast Facts**

*March 12, 2020*

## **FROM THE HOME OFFICE: ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH**

The resilience of the North American air show community is once again being tested.

As they did with the terrorist attacks in 2001, the economic downturn in 2008 and sequestration in 2013, outside events are creating challenges for our industry that none of us could have anticipated just a few weeks ago. And I'm confident that, as an industry, we will once again pass this test and persevere...perhaps as soon as later this spring.

But first, there will be some pain.

Within just the last 24 hours, the World Health Organization has declared the COVID-19 outbreak to be a pandemic, air travel from Europe to the United States has been severely limited, the NBA has suspended its regular season indefinitely, and open houses at MCAS Yuma, NAF El Centro, Laughlin AFB, March ARB and MacDill AFB have been postponed...with additional cancellations and postponements sure to come during the coming days.

For more than 60 years, the safety guidelines in place for U.S. and Canadian air shows have focused principally on spectators and, secondarily, on performers. Similarly, as we deal with COVID-19, we should continue to put the health and well-being of our spectators first. This is not to suggest any particular course of action for ICAS members, but – rather – to emphasize that our spectators will continue to depend on our good judgement and sense of responsibility as we make decisions and determine the best course of action for our events and our businesses.

The challenges our industry will face this spring will be severe. But there are steps that air shows, performers and support service providers can take to minimize or mitigate some of that impact. As the ramifications of this Coronavirus outbreak become clearer and its impact on the air show community comes into sharper focus, ICAS will be in frequent contact to keep you apprised of new developments. We will pass along helpful coping tools and tactics. And, we will do everything we can to help our members avoid negative repercussions when possible and recover from them as quickly as possible when they are unavoidable.

Every ICAS member organization will make its own decision about how to manage this problem. Our commitment to you is that we will work as hard and as smart as we can to make every member's journey through this challenging period as brief and as painless as possible.

And, as we start that process together, we'd like to ask that you pay close attention to this and future communications on this issue. They will contain the information and insight that we think you need to better understand and cope with the challenges we now face as an industry and as individual small business operators.

*John Cudahy  
President  
International Council of Air Shows*

## COVID-19: TEN SUGGESTIONS FOR EVENT ORGANIZERS

As issues and concerns related to COVID-19 continue to dominate each day's news cycles, ICAS members are looking for news, ideas and insight. The situation and circumstances are changing so fast that information we planned to offer as recently as this morning has already changed and/or become obsolete. But there are some observations and insights that continue to remain helpful and relevant even in this fast-changing environment:

1. Establish a strong relationship with your local public health agencies and stay in close contact with them. They are getting the most up to date information and they have the background and training to provide expert guidance to you and your event.
2. On a closely related point: resist the temptation to "practice medicine without a license." The medical community's understanding of COVID-19 is still developing, but it's already clear that it is an unusual virus. Self-appointed public health experts with no experience or expertise will be passing along information that might entice you to make decisions or assumptions that you are not qualified to make. Don't do it. Refer back to item #1 and make your decisions based on facts and expert opinion, not rumors and uninformed speculation.
3. Don't make any decisions before you have to. And, if you are pushed to make an early decision, resist. By late April, everything about COVID-19 might look different than it does right now. And, if it doesn't, you can make a decision then. It is already clear that many will respond to current circumstances by pushing for resolution as soon as possible. In some cases, making a decision sooner rather than later will save money or trouble or both. But, in this current environment, making a decision simply to have that decision behind you may be exactly the wrong thing to do.
4. If delaying a decision is not possible, postpone rather than cancel. Whether you postpone to a specific date or you postpone to a date to be determined later, postponing rather than cancelling has both practical and psychological advantages.
5. Communicate clearly and frequently. Whether it's to local government leaders, performers/vendors or the media, be mindful that the decisions you make and the course of action you take will impact many people and organizations. As circumstances change, be sure to tell everybody who is affected by those changes. In an information vacuum, all of your constituencies will begin finding that information on their own or, worse, make it up.
6. Understand the unique circumstances of your situation. What makes sense in Los Angeles may not make sense in Pierre, South Dakota. What seems obvious to somebody on a U.S. military installation may be impossible or inadvisable at a small general aviation airport. And the best course of action for a show scheduled in early April will not necessarily be the same as it is for a show in mid-June. Try to avoid letting people apply a one-size-fits-all solution to your event. Almost everything about your show is unique to your event, your community and your circumstances.
7. Best practices are emerging (*see related story below*). Implement them at your event to both help mitigate transmission of the virus and communicate to your spectators, sponsors and public health officials that you are taking the outbreak seriously. And pay special attention to the COVID-19-related information and advisories issued by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) in the United States and the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) in Canada.
8. Recognize that you will be making decisions in a situation that has no precedent and is changing almost hourly. To paraphrase Rudyard Kipling, if you can keep your head when all about you

are losing theirs, you'll be a full step ahead in your efforts to navigate the best possible path through this challenging situation.

9. Don't be oblivious to public opinion, but don't over-react to it, either. By their very nature, air shows are community events. Public support is critical to the success of any air show. Protecting and thinking about the community in which your event is being held should be one of your most important considerations. If you make a decision that challenges generally accepted opinions or perspectives in your community, make sure you understand the broader impact of that decision and do a thorough job of explaining and communicating that decision. And, if you can't explain your decisions, consider the possibility that it might not be a good one.
10. Work hard to get beyond personal opinions and political biases. Like many other things, the COVID-19 outbreak is being politicized...in both directions. And this can be enormously frustrating. But -- whatever your personal opinions and political perspectives -- be sure to leave them outside the door as you make decisions related to your air show business. In most situations, they are not relevant or helpful.

### **COVID-19 AND AIR SHOWS: EMERGING BEST PRACTICES**

Whether your show is scheduled for April 4 or November 7, concerns about the Coronavirus will likely be with us through the end of the 2020 air show season. As event organizers plot the way forward, several best practice-type tactics/tools are being adopted widely by air shows planning their response to those concerns. Among them:

1. Familiarize yourself with recommendations being made by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the U.S. and the Public Health Agency for Canada in Canada. [Click here](#) to visit the CDC page dedicated to Coronavirus-related information. [Click here](#) for similar guidance from Canadian government officials. Your default position should be to follow CDC/PHAC recommendations. And, if you stray from them, it's vital that you know why and that you document why you are opting to pursue a different path.
2. Develop and maintain close working relationships with local, state and federal public health officials.
3. Develop and implement a strong public awareness program.
  - a. Dramatically increase your public health-related signage and make it very prominent on your ramp. Signs should remind your spectators to...
    - cover their mouths when sneezing or coughing;
    - wash their hands more frequently;
    - wash their hands for 20 seconds or more; and
    - increase "social distancing."
  - b. Develop a page on your show's website that asks and answers questions related to COVID-19.
  - c. Develop a page on your show's website that offers a list and/or graphics that explain tactics for minimizing the transmission of the COVID-19 virus at your event.
4. Add COVID-19-related topics to staff/volunteer training.
  - a. How to help minimize exposure for spectators.
  - b. How to minimize exposure to your staff and volunteers themselves.
5. Increase the number of portable handwashing stations. These are generally available through the same company from which you rent your portable toilets. In addition to putting them close to those toilets, rent more and scatter them throughout the ramp, both to send the message that

spectators should be washing their hands more frequently and to give those spectators the tools they need to do so.

6. Make gel-type, alcohol-based hand sanitizer available all over your ramp. Large industrial-size containers with pump dispensers. Wipes. Small squeeze bottles. Whatever dispensing style you think will work best.
  - a. Sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol.
7. Develop wash/sanitize protocol for “frequently touched surfaces” (e.g. doorknobs, handrails, countertops, faucets, sinks, etc.).
  - a. Create teams/squads of volunteers with spray-style disinfectants and paper towels.
  - b. Create schedules for cleaning specific surfaces all over the ramp.
8. Consider limiting your crowd. This worked well for the Singapore Airshow in February as they struggled to deal with an early outbreak of the Coronavirus in the Far East. Several ICAS members are considering this approach for their shows later this spring.

© International Council of Air Shows, Inc.  
741 Miller Drive SE, Suite G-1A  
Leesburg, Virginia 20175  
Phone: 703-779-8510  
Email: [icas@airshows.aero](mailto:icas@airshows.aero)  
Website: [www.airshows.aero](http://www.airshows.aero)

ICAS Foundation, <https://icasfoundation.org/>  
North East Council of Air Shows (NECAS), [www.necas.org](http://www.necas.org)  
North West Council of Air Shows (NWCAS), [www.nwcas.org](http://www.nwcas.org)  
South East Council of Air Shows (SECAS), [www.newsecas.org](http://www.newsecas.org)  
South West Council of Air Shows (SWCAS), [www.swcas.org](http://www.swcas.org)