

MEETINGS

# ASSOCIATIONS CANCEL EVENTS, SHAKE UP SCHEDULES IN RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS



BY ERNIE SMITH / FEB 19, 2020  
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Numerous events big and small have had to change their schedules or even cancel in response to lingering concerns about the Wuhan coronavirus. The disease led to the recent cancellation of Mobile World Congress, among others.

While the decision to cancel Mobile World Congress for reasons related to the spread of the Wuhan coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, dominated industry headlines last week, that massive global event isn't the only one affected by the spread of the disease.

Far from it. Events, including many run by associations, have faced major disruptions, delays, and even cancellations. And some of those affected aren't even taking place in Asia—showing how concerns about the disease stretch beyond Chinese borders.

Here are just a few such events that have been affected:

**Inspired Home Show.** While the International Housewares Association plans to continue the event, taking place in Chicago next month, IHA canceled the International Sourcing Expo, a part of the tradeshow that was to include dishes, flatware, and other household products made by 500 Chinese companies, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. “They are factories that are sponsored by the Chinese government ... with those Chinese factories, the challenge is that they can't get here,” said Leana Salamah, the association's vice president of marketing, in comments to the newspaper.

**ILEA Operations Summit.** The International Exhibition Logistics Association's event, which was to be held in Bangkok last week, was postponed until September 2020, according to a note on its website.

**Facebook Global Marketing Summit.** While not an association event, Facebook's March marketing event is high-profile, drawing more than 5,000 people to San Francisco's Moscone Center each year. In a statement to *Recode*, Facebook spokesman Anthony Harrison said the decision to cancel was made out of caution over “evolving public health risks.”

**Asian Business Aviation Conference & Exhibition.** This event, run by the National Business Aviation Association, was supposed to take place April 21-23 in Shanghai, but NBAA canceled the event, saying that the uncertainty caused by the disease had made it hard to finalize important decisions. “While the Chinese government is taking commendable steps to address the coronavirus outbreak, the current situation has presented a very challenging environment for decision making and action for ABACE participants to fully prepare for the event,” said NBAA President and CEO Ed Bolen. “This necessary step is being taken in the spirit of partnership, collaboration, and transparency.”

**Tokyo Marathon.** The Japanese race, taking place March 1, is being limited to just elite runners, notes *Outside magazine*. While the event is more than 1,500 miles away from the Wuhan region, the limiting of the race participants highlights the nature of the risk that organizers see for the public. Concerns about health risks are also leading another major race managed by an association, the Boston Marathon, to consider its options.

**International Congress on Infectious Diseases.** This annual event, which was to take place in Malaysia this week, has been delayed until September—but unlike some other events, it's largely because of the need for the services of members of the International Society for Infectious Diseases. In a statement, ISID President Marc Mendelson noted many of its planned attendees are needed on the home front. “The prevention of further spread and the effective containment of COVID-19 is our top priority,” Mendelson said in the statement. “The people who attend the ICID are critical to the national, regional, and international response to the epidemic and are needed at home in order to engage with and protect their own communities.”

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ERNIE SMITH

Ernie Smith is the social media journalist for Associations Now, a former newspaper guy, and a man who is dangerous when armed with a good pun.

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