

# UFI Info

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## Occupational Health & Safety a hot topic at the IELA Congress in Dublin



Photo: from left to right: Bob Moore, Agility Fairs & Events Australia and IELA Board member; Simon Garrett, X-Venture; Cathy Breden, IAEE; Sonia Thomas, UFI; Bruno Meissner, IFES and Peter Fisk, GeniusWorks.

Occupational Health and Safety was the centre of the debate at the recent International Exhibition Logistics Association (IELA) Congress in Dublin, from 25-28 June, with speakers representing a cross-section of the exhibition industry. The panel was composed of Simon Garrett from X-Venture, Sonia Thomas from UFI, Bruno Meissner from the International Federation of Exhibition Services (IFES) and Cathy Breden from IAEE.

Despite much progress in this area in the past ten years, there is still much to be achieved in terms of providing a safe working environment for the thousands of people working in our industry across the globe. As move in/move out times became increasingly reduced, the need to work ever more quickly becomes a must. Traditionally, there has also been a heavy reliance on complicated infrastructure which makes the building up and breaking down even more challenging.

Sonia Thomas spoke briefly about the Chinese market, where contractors often lack skills and qualifications. This is also the case in other markets, both in developing countries and more mature markets. She applauded the ongoing efforts of the SNIEC in Shanghai, for example, who are doing their utmost to provide a safe workplace. She explained that UFI was currently addressing this issue, which calls upon the united efforts of the organiser, venue and contractors to identify – and hence prevent – potential risks. Similar measures are actively being taken by several other UFI members such as UBM, Reed Exhibitions, and ITE. Simon Garrett underlined the simultaneous exposure of the whole commercial chain in the case of a health and safety issue, which is quite unique to the exhibition industry, with a growing demand for high quality complex events in developing countries. Logistics is a vital part of that chain.

Simon Garrett was the person responsible for putting together the G-Guide, a comprehensive guide to global standards of health and safety at exhibitions. This initiative was initiated by dmg:events, ITE, Reed Exhibitions, UBM, Clarion Events and Mayridge, all companies that identified a need for additional measures in the field of health and safety. Accidents can result in loss of life, with damage to the reputation of the company, and to the reputation of our industry. Accidents can also prove costly in monetary terms with ever-increasing health and safety related legal liabilities. Cathy Breden from US association IAEE gave a comprehensive review of the situation in the US, and referred to different measures taken by other US-based associations.

Another important risk today is that of terrorist attacks, which are unpredictable in nature and therefore difficult to foresee, and can provoke large numbers of casualties and severe disruption to local infrastructure. It is therefore necessary to both reassure visitors and exhibitors, and to ensure their safety. In addition to strong preventive measures, staff should be briefed, prepared and drilled, with clear contingency plans in place, for all eventualities.

UFI signed a memorandum of understanding relating to occupational health and safety with IELA three years ago, and will continue to work closely on this going forward. Bruno Meissner from IFES also declared his wish to be more involved in health and safety related issues in future, hence uniting the efforts of the different associations.