

Gatlinburg Convention Center Safely Welcomes Event Hosts and Attendees with GBAC STAR[™] Accreditation Achievement



Overview

Gatlinburg Convention Center (GCC), nestled in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, welcomes more than 400,000 attendees each year. Its rustic exhibit halls, Tennessee Ballrooms, Mills Auditorium, Executive Boardroom, and 16 meeting rooms make up 148,000 square feet of event space.

To host safe events during the COVID-19 pandemic, GCC needed a way to ensure the facility was maintaining the highest cleanliness standards and provide staff, customers, and guests peace of mind when attending events.

“During this perplexing time in our industry, it is incredibly important for our customers to know their event is taking place in a facility that values and upholds the safety of all who enter the building,” said Dave Esslinger, Director of Sales & Marketing, Gatlinburg Convention and Visitors Bureau. “We sought a way to improve understanding and implementation of infectious disease prevention best practices to give employees and visitors assurance that GCC is committed to cleanliness and hygiene.”

Solutions



Gatlinburg Convention Center turned to the GBAC STAR[™] Facility Accreditation program, a performance-based third-party accreditation from the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC), a Division of ISSA. GBAC STAR is the cleaning industry’s only outbreak prevention, response, and recovery accreditation for facilities.

To achieve GBAC STAR accreditation, facilities must demonstrate compliance with the program’s standards for cleaning, disinfection, and infectious disease prevention and fulfill 20 key elements. GBAC’s team of industry experts work closely with each participating facility, offering



Gatlinburg Convention Center Gatlinburg, TN

guidance and reviewing each submission. Accredited facilities then re-apply for the designation on a yearly basis.

Along with achieving GBAC STAR accreditation, GCC follows the state’s Tennessee Pledge and adheres to all state and county executive orders.

The Gatlinburg Convention and Visitors Bureau and Convention Center conducted frequent and detailed communication with customers to promote GBAC STAR accreditation and COVID-19 protocols. First, the team prepared an extensive document outlining new safety and cleaning protocols, which was then distributed to all event hosts. Additionally, GCC shared educational materials on ISSA and the Global Biorisk Advisory Council to increase awareness of the accreditation program.

Results



From June 2020 to February 2021, Gatlinburg Convention Center safely and successfully hosted more than 30 events with a total attendance of more than 44,000 guests. These events include everything from group meetings and conferences to craft fairs, religious conferences, and a gift show spanning the entire facility.

With the help of GBAC STAR accreditation, Gatlinburg Convention Center has experienced the following benefits:

Enhanced cleaning procedures. As part of pursuing GBAC STAR accreditation, GCC increased the frequency of training and reminders to ensure convention center staff executed cleaning and hygiene protocols consistently and effectively. New practices included performing accelerated cleaning of restrooms several times each day. In conjunction with the cleaning methods learned from GBAC, GCC acquired several electrostatic sprayers. These sprayers charge the disinfecting particles, allowing them to attract and adhere to surfaces and hard-to-reach places. Cleaning staff use the equipment to disinfect all meeting spaces, restrooms, and common areas before an event opens.

Increased customer confidence. According to Esslinger, “Each promoter we have hosted since the reopening of the GCC has thanked us for going above and beyond to keep their workers and attendees safe. We are able to do this by following the safety measures and practices implemented through GBAC STAR.”

The accreditation, along with the detailed communication from the GCC, allowed event hosts to pass information along to attendees and assure them that the facility regarded cleanliness and safety as a top priority.

Better competitive standing. In his communications with meeting planners, Esslinger observed that many had previous knowledge of GBAC STAR and were impressed by GCC’s accreditation. “I feel this will go a long way in capturing future business, especially if our convention center is up against a facility that is not GBAC STAR accredited,” he said.

“The GBAC STAR Facility Accreditation has allowed us to ease the minds of both promoters and visitors of the convention center,” added Esslinger. “We can now easily convey to upcoming events that the Gatlinburg Convention Center has demonstrated compliance with the program’s 20 core elements, ranging from standard operating procedures and risk assessment strategies to personal protective equipment and emergency preparedness and response measures.”

Visit our website at [GBAC.org](https://www.gbac.org)

Contact us by phone at 1-800-225-4772 (North America)
or 1-847-982-0800 (outside North America)

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—Dave Esslinger
Director of Sales & Marketing
Gatlinburg Convention & Visitors Bureau



About GBAC, a Division of ISSA

Composed of international leaders in the field of microbial-pathogenic threat analysis, mitigation, response and recovery, the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC), a Division of ISSA, provides training, guidance, accreditation, certification, crisis management assistance and leadership to government, commercial and private entities looking to mitigate, quickly address and/or recover from biological threats and real-time crises. The organization’s services include biorisk management program assessment and training, Forensic Restoration® response and remediation, the GBAC STAR™ facility and service accreditation programs, training and certification of individuals and consulting for building owners and facility managers.