

Orange County Convention Center Hosts Safe Events with GBAC STAR[™] Accreditation Achievement



Overview

The award-winning Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) in Orlando, Fla. welcomes many visitors from around the world. In fact, its nearly 200 annual events include 115 conventions and tradeshows that bring in more than 1.5 million attendees and a \$3 billion economic impact annually.

The convention center, known as The Center of Hospitality, comprises two buildings: the West Building and the North-South Building. These feature more than 2 million square feet of exhibition space and 7 million square feet in total. Maintaining these facilities is a big undertaking under normal circumstances. During a pandemic, it's paramount that the facility is as clean as possible.

While the OCCC did not close its doors completely during the pandemic, its leaders recognized the facility would have to modify its approach to creating safe, healthy, and enjoyable experiences.

"We realized very early on that creating formal procedures around cleaning and disinfecting, and developing guidelines for social distancing, wearing masks, and detecting COVID-19 symptoms were essential for the safety of our visitors, clients, and employees," said Mark Tester, Executive Director, Orange County Convention Center. "We sought out organizations with expert knowledge who would be able to help OCCC respond to the challenges of the pandemic."

Solutions



To ensure OCCC was fully equipped to host safe events, the facility pursued the GBAC STAR[™] accreditation from the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC), the cleaning industry's only outbreak prevention, response, and recovery accreditation for facilities. To achieve the GBAC STAR accreditation, facilities must demonstrate capability and compliance with 20 key program elements, including



Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.

personal protective equipment, personnel training, and emergency response. Applications are reviewed by GBAC's experts and accreditation is renewed annually, at which point organizations must showcase how their procedures and results have improved.

In addition to achieving the accreditation, the OCCC implemented its Recovery and Resiliency Plans in July 2020, developed in consultation with Orange County's Health Services Department and the Florida Department of Health. The OCCC is also collaborating with a large established healthcare system in Central Florida for expert guidance and on-site support in the form of temperature checks, screenings, and telemedicine visits.

GBAC also offers training courses for individuals, and the OCCC has 28 Environmental Service (EVS) workers ranging from leads, assistant supervisors, supervisors, and managers that have passed the GBAC Fundamentals Online Course.

"The GBAC STAR accreditation process enabled us to rethink and realign our cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting schedules and procedures," added Tester. "Staff previously handled the majority of cleaning and disinfecting at night and behind the scenes. GBAC STAR has taught us that customers feel more confident and assured when they witness cleaning taking place."

Results



Following its GBAC STAR accreditation, the OCCC hosted several successful and safe events, including the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Junior National Volleyball Championships, the Together Again Expo, the Florida Wedding Expo and the International Drive Resort Area Chamber of Commerce board of directors meeting.

Through accreditation, the OCCC has realized the following benefits:

Consistent cleaning results. Through the accreditation process, OCCC learned which procedures, chemicals, tools, and equipment are well-suited to take on today's infectious disease challenges. The facility only uses cleaning and disinfecting products that have been validated by the CDC and have been assigned a number from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Additionally, it has a documented approach to facility maintenance and its employees are properly trained to follow the outlined steps to make sure OCCC is cleaned frequently and thoroughly. "We were initially looking at non-alcohol based hand sanitizer that was not EPA approved. GBAC's guidance helped us go in a better direction and ensured we were going to be using the right alcohol-based sanitizer and the right cleaning processes," said Tester.

Greater assurance for visitors. The OCCC's custodial team now conducts cleaning during the day and in the evenings according to GBAC STAR accredited processes. Bringing greater visibility to the cleaning process gives guests a high degree of confidence that the facility is dedicated to the health and safety of its visitors and has resulted in glowing reviews following its events.

Guests and clients also appreciate that the OCCC has guidelines in place for physical distancing, face masks, and temperature checks, and has implemented a new check-in process that manages attendee flow, avoids congestion, and administers essential health screenings in the form of temperature checks and surveys. The convention center also conducts daily temperature checks on employees and has over 150 portable hand sanitizer stations that can be relocated to the most trafficked and effective locations.

Confidence in bidding situations. When bidding to host a new event, the GBAC STAR accreditation gives clients reassurance right away that OCCC is going above and beyond to maintain safety. A commitment to cleanliness will be an increasingly important consideration that may sway event planners to select OCCC, resulting in additional business that supports the facility and the local economy.

"Acquiring the GBAC Star accreditation, the third-party gold seal on cleaning and disinfecting, provides assurance to clients, guests, and employees that they are safe and secure across the OCCC's campus," added Tester. "With the help of GBAC STAR, local and state health departments, and healthcare partners, the OCCC is securing its future as a leading venue and as an economic driver for the destination and the industry."

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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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.