

**IAAPA EMEA –
Learnings on COVID for FEC operators
21 December 2020**

IAAPA EMEA regroups many volunteers and committee members from various countries and constituencies including many operators in the FEC industry. They have discussed the current situation and learnings from the COVID19 pandemic and decided to share the outcome with all members.

Note: This is a summary of some members of IAAPA EMEA and does not address every consideration for all FECs or attractions. IAAPA assumes no responsibility but offers these best practices to members for consideration.

Operational aspects

- In many countries across the EMEA region, FECs and indoor entertainment is still closed
- Safety stays priority #1: Offer a safe experience. The biggest positive response from customers is when they see staff regularly cleaning after use of attractions, doing temperature checks at the entrance and give welcome messages
- Operate with very limited capacities and health checks alongside geographical checks to ensure customers from higher risk areas are not moving into lower ones in case your country has a several-tier system
- Ventilation, capacities, structured cleaning protocols and new operational systems for soft play structures are focus areas for safe operations
- Registering each customer is mandatory in certain regions and has a negative impact on operating costs, but can actually have the positive side effect of improving the database quality dramatically
- From a business perspective: talk to stakeholders, in particular to the landlords and make use of this crisis to redefine the relationship and long-term occupancy cost
- Renegotiate with the (F&B) suppliers
- Stay calm and focus on long-term planning: invent 10 small non-expensive things that will make the few customers that are visiting you right now think: “This is so much more than before” – attractions have now more than ever the opportunity to treat every customer like a VIP

- Stay in contact with your guests also when you are closed, not only on social media. Privatize facilities, offer virtual experiences or even sell virtual birthday parties
- Think about alternative ways of selling goods as for example market stalls and carts with stocks of merchandise and redemption gifts
- Now is the right moment to turn your attraction cashless Do not be lazy: Make it easy for the customer, not for you! Do not force customers to do something which mainly suits you
- Converting from paper tickets to E-tickets will result in 50% less touch points for customers and perceived better hygiene overall, lower R&M costs, no refill requirements means no staff time etc., and an overall positive customer response to this change
- Try to innovate with new pricing structures: do NOT discount. People will go out and will cherish the experience rather than the price

External affairs

- Requirements and limitations are very different from region to region, making it hard to operate as a park group with different locations in different regions
- Know your stakeholders. Keep a close relationship with them and show them how you can operate safely. Operators must guide authorities on how to operate successful
- For change to take place on a national level, cooperation with other tourism/amusement industries within each country is necessary
- In most countries, government aid is provided for furloughed staff. However, little to no countries offer substantial government aid for businesses (please also see the IAAPA EMEA document on government support measures)
- Indoor entertainment might be considered as a high-risk area, which will make negotiations with suppliers more difficult

Internal organization

- Just because team members follow the rules in the park, does not mean they do it at home
- Organizations have used the opportunity to become much leaner. This should pay off in 2022
- It is the right moment to finetune the teams and identify performing and non-performing staff for potential staff reductions
- Focus on employee satisfaction of the remaining teams

- Stay connected with your staff through videocalls, messenger software, webinars etc., even when they were furloughed
- It's important to let the staff that wasn't furloughed know why they still have their job, while some other employees might have lost theirs. It's important there's no 'survivor guilt' in your staff
- Larger groups could shift some of their staff to other divisions within the same company
- Some operators supported their staff with food deliveries, while others organized inexpensive but welcomed charity efforts for those fighting the Pandemic

Operator Outlook:

- An improvement of the overall situation is expected to happen after Easter 2021 with a tough start and a stronger end
- Low international demand in 2021, priority on regional markets. Airport capacities are and will still be reduced
- "Back-to-a new normal" is expected by 2022, however customer behavior might have changed and will result in only 80-85% of pre-Covid numbers
- With the current measures on cost-savings, the business should be more profitable by then
- Vaccination will take time
- Keep your product relevant
- Adopt, adapt, and improve