



PRPS-PAEE Conference & Expo Cancelled

March 12, 2020 11:00 am

As the emerging public health crisis has heightened dramatically in recent days, we have made the very difficult decision to cancel next week's Conference.

Not only do we need to contribute what we can to mitigate the unprecedented spread of the COVID-19 virus, as responsible professionals, we must at times choose what's both difficult and right.

In response to the viral threat, we had developed a Conference Contingencies Plan that outlines various parameters, thresholds, and a framework in which to determine a responsible and appropriate collective response to various levels of impacts.

Yesterday's fluid events brought a great number of speaker, attendee, and exhibitor cancellations, most due to imposed restrictions on travel, but others out of concern for their children whose schools will be closed next week. Governor Wolf restricted all unnecessary travel for all state employees. Department of Health Secretary Levine held a press conference to highlight the latest trends and public health responses. While the state has not imposed public travel bans, it does support those who do. To protect their employees' health, cities, counties, universities and other entities have curtailed attendance and travel to large group gatherings.

It became evident late in the day that we had reached a tipping point. No longer did we have a viable option to reschedule or transform enough educational sessions to virtual presentations, nor be able to offer enough professional development options. The flow of cancellations continued. Our General Session, whose panelists are all state employees, couldn't be conducted. We considered and determined that a virtual address by our Keynote was not feasible, nor desirable.

The situation is hugely disappointing, but unfortunately largely out of our control. This is a year's worth of valuable work, and in such a unique collaboration, with so many appealing aspects. Cancelling is a shame, but perhaps better than shambling ahead with what could become a far inferior event, and dealing with the problems that it in itself would cause.

Last night I outlined our prospects to the members of both the PRPS and the PAEE Boards of Directors, the Joint Conference Committee and the staff. It is with great regret, but with full agreement, that they support this unfortunate decision.

What now?

1. Registration Refunds. The Boards of Directors have approved a one-time exception to the Conference Cancellation and Refund Policy. For those who request a registration refund, PRPS will grant it in full. However, in light of the substantial financial hit to the Conference, we do ask all to consider converting your registration fee, or a portion of it, to a general charitable, tax-deductible donation to help offset unrecoverable costs, for which we are happy to provide a receipt. Because of the volume in the hundreds, please have patience as we process refunds and receipts.

To submit your choice, follow the correct link to a simple form, or call 814-234-4272:

- [Conference Registrants](#)
- [Vendors, Exhibitors, Sponsors](#)

2. Lodging Refunds. We have talked with the good people at Seven Springs Mountain Resort, and they have offered refunds on all room deposits. Please call Registrations at Seven Springs to retrieve them: 800-452-2223 or 814-352-7777 x 7009.

3. Service and Product Cancellations. Our Conference Committee is busy notifying all the Conference product and service providers to cancel and negotiate arrangements.

4. CEUs/Act 48 Credits. For those who were counting on earning CEUs and Act 48 Credits, we refer you to the [calendar of workshops, webinars and other trainings already scheduled](#). We will be inviting many of our speakers to convert their ready-made presentations to a virtual format, so we may still offer them as a webinar. We are also planning to hold two one-day Mini-Conferences in the fall, possibly at Seven Springs and in an eastern city.

5. Awards Recognition. I've asked our Recognition and Awards Committee to recommend a Plan B for presenting our very deserving Award winners with the recognition they deserve, which may include a series of local presentations in their own jurisdictions.

Obviously, we suddenly have a whole new set of tasks, questions and challenges. And we will work them out. Your understanding and support in this difficult choice is gratefully appreciated! We are still in this together!

In your service,

Tim Herd, CPRE
CEO