

## I&D Expectations

In my book- *Trade Shows from One Country to the Next* I address the differences when exhibiting from one country to the next. A point I fail to make strong enough for international exhibit suppliers and exhibitors is that there are differences from city to city within the same country. This is especially critical for international suppliers to understand when doing shows in the USA. Each US city has different rates and regulations for carpenter labor, drayage (material handling), electric, rigging, catering, and AV/Truss Lighting. Working with, and trusting, a local exhibit supplier partner when doing a show abroad will really help to avoid surprises when installing an exhibit for any show in the world, and especially for shows in the US.



The USA may be the land of the free, but things are not so free when it comes to organizing services and labor for a trade shows compared to the service methods used throughout the rest of the world. Your exhibit supplier/partners do not control the rules, so trust their advice from venue to venue. The two major

differences in the US- Material Handling (Drayage) and Union labor. The majority of all major US venues follow the General Contractor/Drayage model. Some venues are 'right to work' states and allow non union workers to install an exhibit. Few (if any) venues will allow you to unload your own truck and deliver materials to the stand site. Few will allow you to vacuum your own carpet. Know the rules. This concept holds true for electric services and labor, as well as AV and Truss Lighting installation at the show site. As an international exhibitor, or exhibit supplier, you may not agree with the rules (and I would agree with you on this), but it really wastes a lot of time arguing your point, and the facilities will not change their rules for your situation. My advice, understand and respect the rules in place at each venue. Stop being logical. The experience will then be less painful. My second piece of advice, work with a local partner, and also speak directly with a local service expert at each US venue. Each of the major facilities in the US have full time employees in charge of the services they offered within their facility.

In many cases, the assigned show contractor and your local exhibit partner can help to explain what is allowed, and what is not allowed for each show in their convention center. Do not assume what you did in Orlando will be allowed in Chicago. Or assume that the rules at Chicago Restaurant Show are the same as at the IMTS show in McCormick Place. Same venue, but different rules.

The American trade show (and the American marketplace) continue to be a strong marketing source for world companies to sell their products and services. As international exhibitors continue to increase their participation in US trade shows, our ability as suppliers and venues to guide international exhibitors to a successful experience will help us all in the long run.

The majority of world trade shows in the USA are held in three cities- Las Vegas, Orlando, and Chicago, so lean on your exhibit partner to help you fully understand the rules and expectations for each of these venues when planning your exhibit design and installation.



For the past ten years, **Chicago's McCormick Place** has really reached out to help international exhibitors understand what can and cannot be done within their convention center. Knowing who to contact for technical and regulation advice is key.

For **I&D labor issues** at **McCormick Place**, you can reach out to **Tom Cassell** and **Pat Allen** directly. They work all the shows, regardless who the show contractor is. Their role is to explain regulations and to pave the way for your exhibit install to run smoothly. They also represent show management to act as real time problem solvers for on site issues. Their advice and support during the install at any show can save time and money for exhibitor budgets and expectations.

For **AV/Truss Lighting** at **McCormick Place**, reach out to **Don Gariety**/ Technical Director and Union Steward at McCormick Place. AV and truss lighting are many times the first item to be installed. Getting off to a slow start can back up the entire I&D schedule. Don will review floor plans, list of equipment, electric power requirements, fire safety, and labor requirements. In many cases carpenters, electricians, decorators, riggers, and AV technicians must work together to complete a task. Planning here is an important step. Do not assume that your staff people will do all the work without them.

*Don- What are the most frequent AV/Lighting violations you deal with at McCormick?* “The biggest problem is not violations but understanding the rules and regulations before a violation occurs. And that is part of what we are here to do by providing information and guidance prior to the installation of the show, so we can have a smooth and successful event without any violations or surprises. Safety is also a major concern.”

*Don & Tom- What is the best advice for international suppliers coming to work a show at Chicago's McCormick?* “Make sure that the general contractor and your exhibit partner makes you aware of the rules and regulations for your event. If you do not have a general contractor contact, you can call on us directly to guide you properly before you get onsite at McCormick and have unknown problems to deal with.”

In conclusion, do not assume that all rules are the same at US facilities. Mounting a truss with lighting from the ceiling of a facility will have different requirements from city to city. Many shows and facilities will not even allow hanging trusses or hanging signs. To not check on this would be a major error for suppliers, and a real disappointment for their exhibitor.

Although this article was directed to international exhibitors coming to the US for a show, it surely applies to US exhibit suppliers with show in the US as well. Many exhibits are designed for multi show applications. Designing an exhibit with truss lighting and a hanging sign might work for one city venue, but may not be allowed at another. Checking on the rules and facility regulations for the exhibit programs you manage in the world is a critical step. Know who to reach out to and double check your assumptions. Your customer depends on your advise and understanding of the regulations to guide the way for their success and budget.