

A "Healthy" Midway

GOSA Advocates for Best Practices during Corona Virus Times

Months of social distancing mandates and cleanliness messaging will no-doubt have a profound long-term impact on consumers. Without question, your customers in a post pandemic environment will be looking for more than thrills as they venture back to midways across America. This summer and beyond, the goal for carnivals and fairs is "good clean fun," and the following top ten best practices provide the foundation for effective operations.

Top Ten Best Practices

1. Post social distance guidelines
2. Cover employee faces
3. Sanitize equipment, frequently
4. No seating with strangers
5. Take temperatures
6. Gated and One-Way Midways
7. Separate employees and guests
8. Abundant hand sanitizing stations
9. Online ticket sales
10. Effective communications

Posted Social Distance Guidelines. Make plans to post signs at the entrance to ride queue lines reminding riders of proper social distancing etiquette. Spacing marks on the ground or built into the queuing system will be welcomed by families.

Masks. Up until a long time ago, say 8 weeks, if you saw people out and about wearing medical masks you would think they were crazy or a germaphobes, or both. The perceptions of wearing a mask has shifted dramatically, to the point consumers may wear masks to fairs and festivals. Will your employees wear them too? Medical or State mandates aside, they should wear masks to make the public feel safe riding rides, buying food and playing games.

Masks could be a sponsorship or communication opportunity. The front of a mask provides a great space to add a sponsor logo or message. A company is producing masks that look like human faces. In true American style the white medical mask will be turned into a fashion accessory.

Sanitizing equipment. Constant sanitizing of areas the public touches on rides, games or food areas will be critical to your customers peace of mind as well as their health and the health of your employees.

Loading riders. Avoid seating amusement riders with people they didn't travel with to the carnival. Promote this on your website and on the Social Distancing signs.

Temperature Checks. As a safety precaution you should check your employee's temperature each day at the start of their shift. Large parks may check the temperature of guests at the admission gate and fairs may follow suit.

Gated and One-Way Midways. Health departments may be reluctant to open stand-alone carnivals or festivals with the potential for uncontrolled capacity. Carnivals that operate more like amusement parks will have a greater chance of opening. Use snow fencing around your midway to control the numbers of guests. Post one-way signs on the midway to encourage traffic flow in one direction.

Plexiglass shields. Should plexiglass be installed between employees and guests? Shields are common at many ticket boxes and concession trailers. Where else could they be installed?

Hand Sanitizing Stations. Add or increase the number of hand washing stations on the midway. These units will be important for customers and employees to follow CDC guidelines to wash hands often. Customers will look for and appreciate the appropriate number of hand sanitizing stations set-up throughout the midway.

Online ticket sales. Encourage use of your online wristband sales system. Combined with the gated midway timed ride sessions could be created. An example is four 3-hour sessions each day. The midway is cleared at the end of each session. Timed sessions allow for a less packed, controlled midway.

Communication. Through your website, advance press releases etc. communicate the following:

- You are committed to creating a safe and enjoyable environment for all your customers and employees.
- Your food, games, and rides are cleaned and sanitized throughout the day.
- All employees have their temperature checked each morning before starting work.
- Your employees have the information they need to stay healthy or stay home if they aren't feeling well.
- You encourage your patrons to follow the guidance set by the CDC. If they are not feeling well, they should stay home.

No one can predict what changes to society this pandemic will cause but whatever steps you take to address the “new normal” should be communicated. If you create policies and invest in equipment to keep your workers and customers safe and healthy than take the time to communicate your “healthy midway” campaign to your fairs, festivals and customers. Outlining the steps being taken to ensure their health will help bring attendance, and spending, back to America’s midways sooner than later.

The commitment to a healthy midway comes at a cost. But what will the true cost be if midways are deemed unsanitary in the post pandemic world and left out of Americans choices when looking for clean family fun.