





A hybrid PCI Convention and the future of PCI meetings

As I write this message, things are looking very good for the upcoming 2021 PCI Convention at the Precast Show in New Orleans, La., from May 18 to 22. The news on COVID-19 in New Orleans is very encouraging. As of April 5, the Big Easy is experiencing fewer than 50 cases per day, a positivity rate of less than 1%, and a transmission rate well below 1% according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. The rolling 14-day case average is -37%, down to 51 cases per 100,000 residents. As in many parts of the country, vaccinations in New Orleans continue at an encouraging pace. The city reports that almost 62% of those over the age of 65 have been vaccinated and 30% over the age of 18 have already been vaccinated. On April 2, the city entered a new phase of easing restrictions. Masks are still mandatory, as is social distancing, but indoor restaurants are now allowed up to 75% capacity, convention space and bars up to 50%, and all outdoor venues are at 100% capacity.

The city and the convention center are as eager to host our event as many PCI members are eager to be together again, with the PCI Convention and the Precast Show being some of the first events to be hosted there. We are looking forward to a successful event, and PCI and National Precast Concrete Association are taking every measure to keep attendees safe. All attendees will have their temperature taken before entering the convention center, and per New Orleans regulations, masks will be mandatory and all meeting spaces will be arranged for proper social distancing. A complete list of all safety precautions is on the PCI website at <https://www.pci.org/convention> on the registration page. I sure hope to see you there!

For those who cannot join us in person, we've taken the extraordinary step of streaming every committee and council meeting so PCI members can participate even if travel is not possible. If you plan to join virtually, you will still need to register for the convention and indicate each meeting you plan to attend so you can get the online access code to the meeting. We look forward to your being able to contribute to PCI committee work from a distance and take advantage of the value of PCI involvement.



This past year has taught us a lot of unanticipated lessons about how we can use technology to conduct PCI business and keep our projects moving forward in ways we never would have imagined just 18 months ago. It has called into question our 66-year-old model of using in-person meetings almost exclusively to get things done and to participate in PCI. The added expense of making in-person meetings also available online will need to be considered when we finally reach the post-pandemic world. Can you truly be contributing as a member of a committee, council, or the board of directors without ever being there in person? What is the value of those countless hallway conversations that aren't part of the formal meeting? Can we conduct some meetings online before the convention or Committee Days, greatly reducing the number of onsite meetings and avoiding overlap or even shortening the duration of the in-person event? Finding answers to these questions will be the job of a task group authorized by the board at its meeting in February to make recommendations on how we combine the in-person and online experiences to achieve an even better PCI member experience. It is going to be challenging but exciting, and we'll probably look back a few years from now and say, Why didn't we do this sooner? 



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