



**IAEE**

Exhibitions and Events Mean Business

International  
Association of  
Exhibitions and Events®

# Guidelines for Display Rules and Regulations

## 2019 North American Update



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The following **Guidelines for Display Rules and Regulations** have been established by the International Association of Exhibitions and Events® (IAEE) to assist in promoting continuity and consistency among North American exhibitions and events. This revised 2019 edition is offered as a resource for exhibition and event organizers to use in creating consistent and fair exhibiting standards for their events.

Recognizing that every show is unique, IAEE presents the information contained within as recommendations or suggestions for exhibiting standards each Organizer should consider. Organizers are encouraged to review the **Guidelines** and then develop their own show-customized set of exhibiting rules and regulations based on the individual features of their specific exhibition or event.

Once an Organizer has finalized their show's official set of display rules, it is good practice to provide access to a digital copy within the show's exhibitor prospectus, an exhibitor services kit, and the official rules and regulations pertaining to exhibitor participation. By providing exhibitors with the professional standards expected of their displays and participation, they will be prepared to properly design, build and plan their booth's layout and content allowing for an environment where all exhibitors will have the opportunity for successful interaction with their audiences.

**Important Note:** Although compliance with fire, safety, the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other state, federal or provincial government requirements have been addressed, Organizers should always check with exhibition service contractors and the facility for specific details on local regulations and requirements.

*IAEE is a global association that serves as the foremost authority on exhibitions and events management and operations, and these **Guidelines** are the model for most North American exhibitions and events but in all instances, organizations should consult their legal counsel. In no event shall IAEE be held liable for damages of any kind in connection with the material, methods, information, techniques, opinions or procedures expressed, presented, or illustrated in these **Guidelines** or related materials.*



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IAEE has identified two distinctly different styles of show display regulations. One style is “Line-of-Sight” while the second is “Cubic Content.” Organizers should decide which style is best suited to their event or designated section of the event.

## LINE-OF-SIGHT STYLE

Line-of-Sight display rules provide restrictions on certain areas of booths to allow attendees to view neighboring booths in their line of sight as they walk the floor. There are a variety of booth types, and each one is addressed below with specific insight on how to implement Line-of-Sight regulations.

### LINEAR BOOTH

The ability to have products or services easily seen by attendees as they walk the aisles is essential to all exhibitors, and that is the basis for including a Linear Booth Line-of-Sight setback rule. Linear Booths, also called “in-line” booths, are generally arranged in a straight line and have neighboring exhibitors on their immediate right and left, leaving only one side exposed to the aisle.

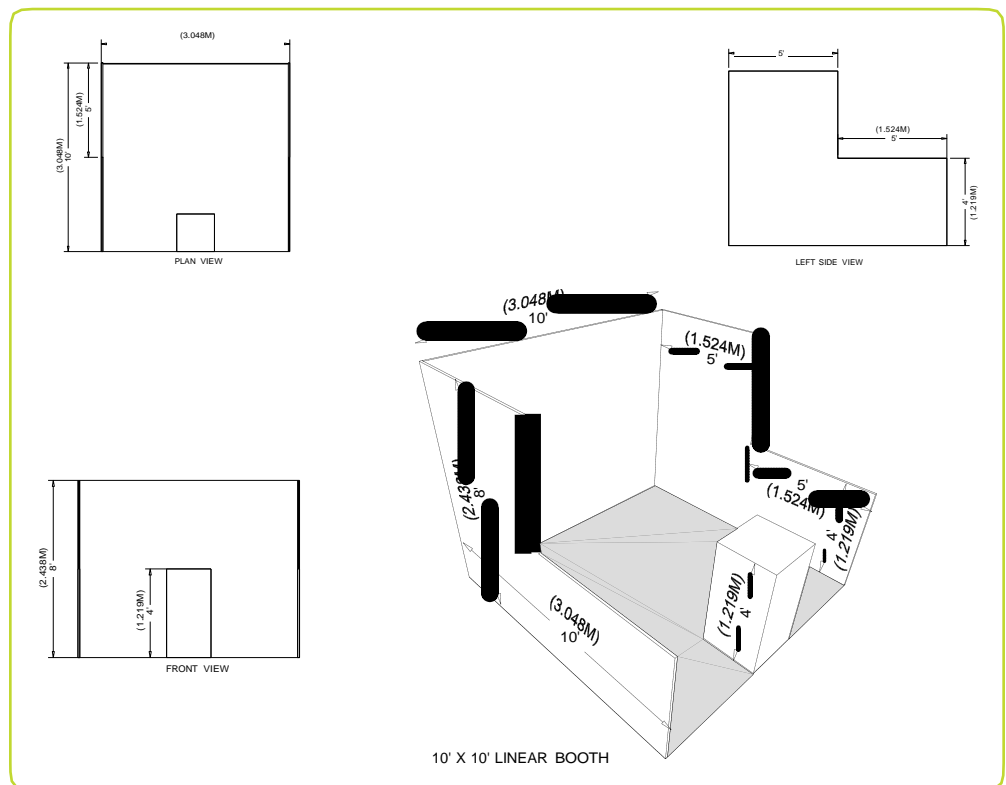
#### Dimensions

For purposes of consistency and ease of layout and/or reconfiguration, floor plan design in increments of 10ft (3.05m) has become the de facto standard in the United States. Therefore, unless constricted by space or other limitations, Linear Booths are most commonly 10ft (3.05m) wide and 10ft (3.05m) deep, i.e. 10ft by 10ft

(3.05m by 3.05m). A maximum back wall height limitation of 8ft (2.44m) is generally specified to prevent display materials from imposing on neighboring exhibits behind the back wall.

#### Use of Space

Regardless of the number of Linear Booths utilized, e.g. 10ft by 20ft (3.05m by 6.10m), 10ft by 30ft (3.05m by 9.14m), 10ft by 40ft (3.05m by 12.19m), etc., display materials should be arranged in such a manner so as not to obstruct sight lines of neighboring exhibitors. The maximum height of 8ft (2.44m) is allowed only in the rear half of the booth space, with a 4ft (1.22m) height restriction imposed on all materials in the remaining space forward to the aisle. Note: When three or more Linear Booths are used in combination as a single exhibit space, the 4ft (1.22m) height limitation is applied only to that portion of exhibit space which is within 10ft (3.05m) of an adjoining booth.

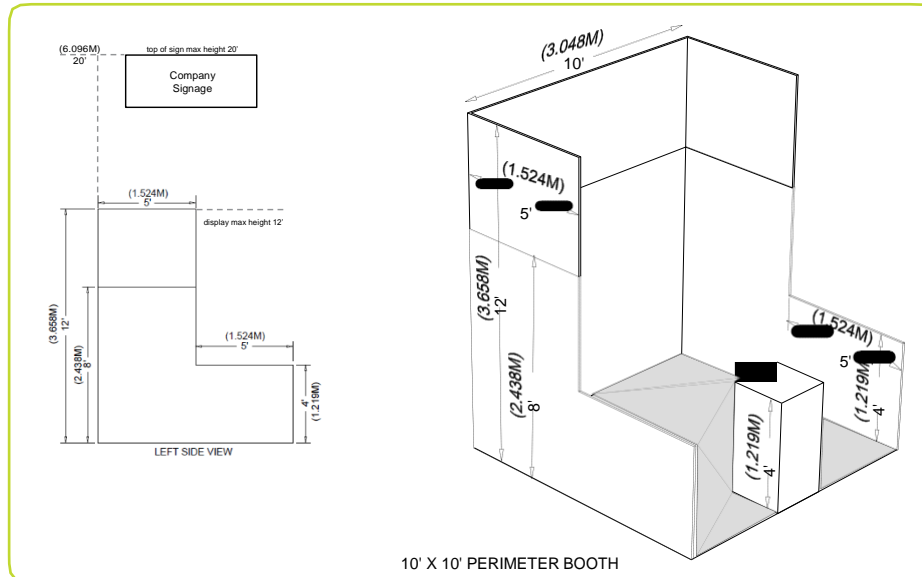


## CORNER BOOTH

A Corner Booth is a Linear Booth at the end of a series of in-line booths with exposure to intersecting aisles on two sides. All guidelines for Linear Booths apply.

## PERIMETER BOOTH

A Perimeter Booth is a Linear Booth that backs to an outside wall of the exhibit facility rather than to another exhibit.

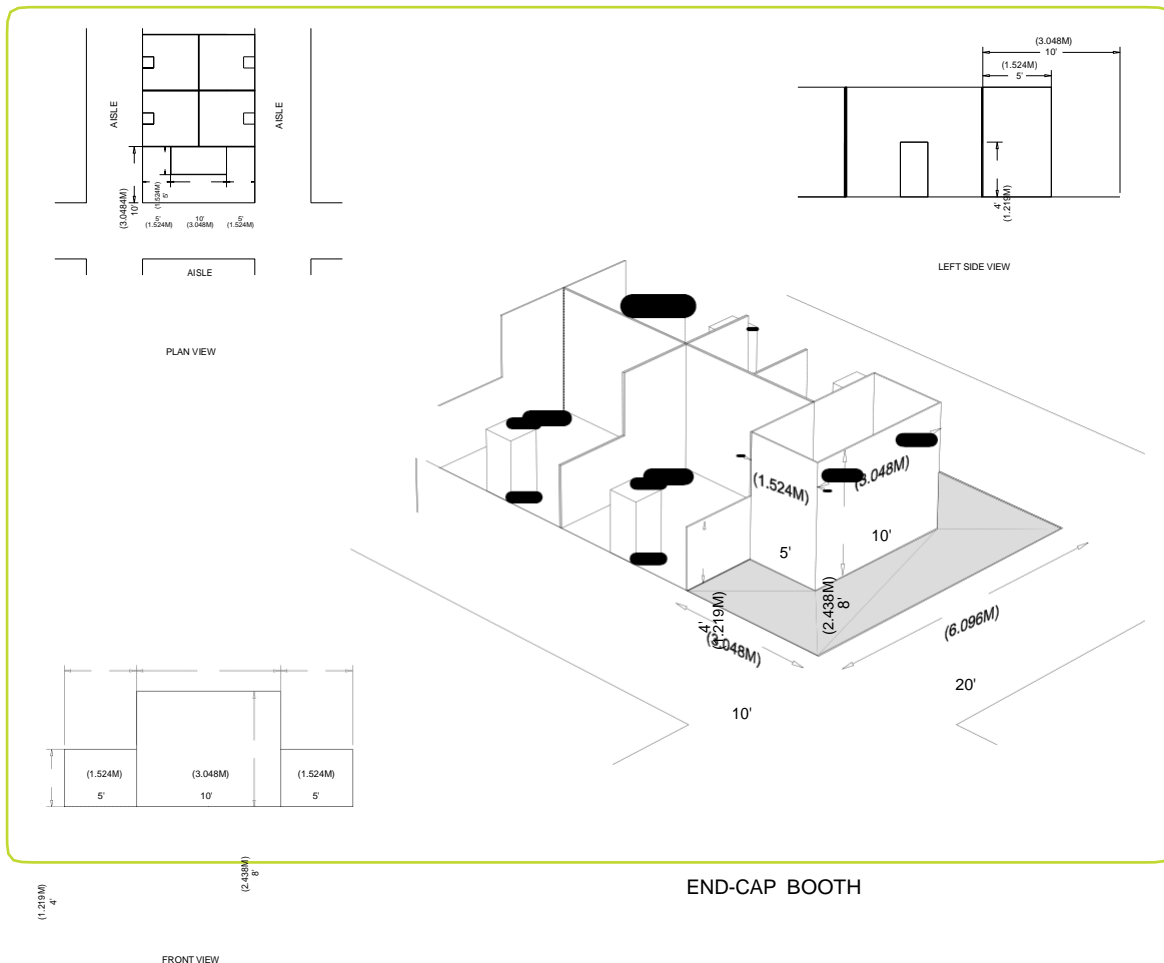


### Dimensions and Use of Space

All guidelines for Linear Booths apply to Perimeter Booths except that the typical maximum back wall height for Perimeter Booths is 12ft (3.66m).

## END-CAP BOOTH

An End-cap configuration is essentially an in-line (linear) booth placed in the position of a Peninsula or Split Island. For shows that have Line-of-Sight rules and not Cubic Content, this configuration must follow the dimensions below. Organizers should be alert to exhibitors reserving End-cap configurations to ensure they do not violate Linear Booth Line-of-Sight regulations for neighboring exhibits. (In most cases, this booth style is not recommended due to the Line-of-Sight issues, and Organizers should be aware of these challenges when using them.)



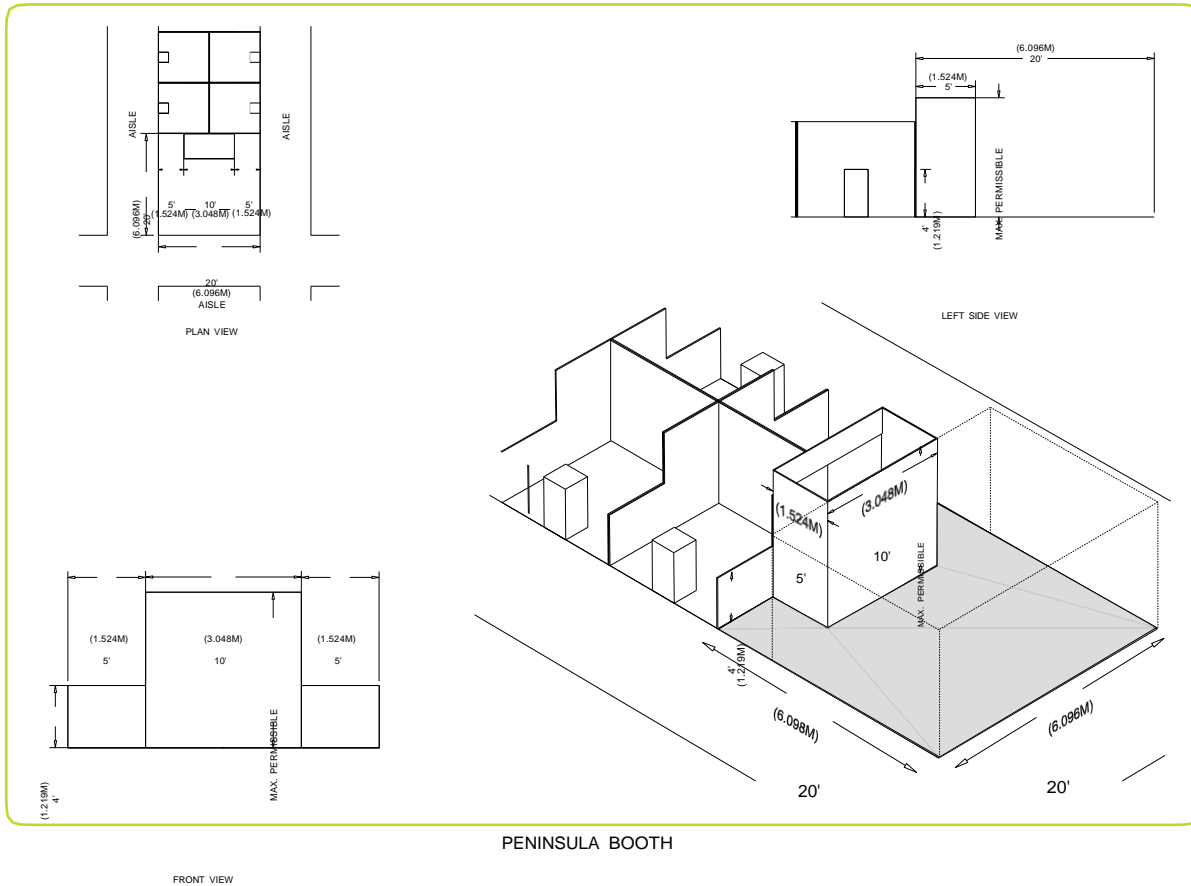
END-CAP BOOTH

### Dimensions and Use of Space

End-cap Booths are generally 10ft (3.05m) deep by 20ft (6.10m) wide. The maximum back wall height allowed is 8ft (2.44m) and the maximum backwall width allowed is 10ft (3.05m) at the center of the backwall with a maximum 5ft (1.52m) height on the two side aisles. Within 5ft of the two side aisles, the maximum height for any display materials is 4ft.

## PENINSULA BOOTH

A Peninsula Booth is exposed to aisles on three sides. There are two types of Peninsula Booths: (a) one which backs to Linear Booths, and (b) one which backs to another Peninsula Booth which is referred to as a “Split Island Booth.”

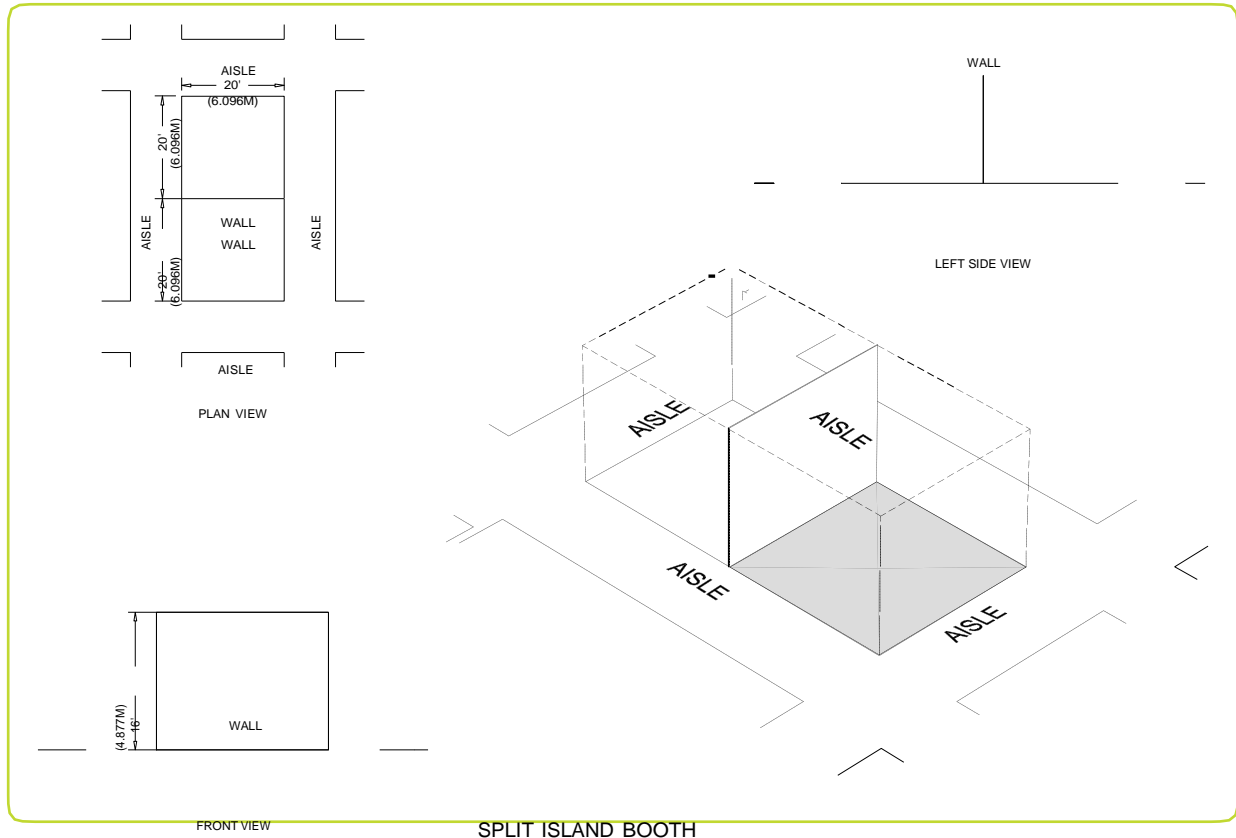


### Dimensions and Use of Space

A Peninsula Booth is usually 20ft by 20ft (6.10m by 6.10m) or larger. When a Peninsula Booth backs up to two Linear Booths, the back wall is restricted to 4ft (1.22m) high within 5ft (1.52m) of each aisle, permitting adequate line of sight for the adjoining Linear Booths. A typical maximum height allowance is 16ft (4.88m), including signage for the center portion of the back wall. Double-sided signs, logos and graphics shall be set back 10ft (3.05m) from adjacent booths.

## SPLIT ISLAND BOOTH

A Split Island Booth is a Peninsula Booth which shares a common back wall with another Peninsula Booth.



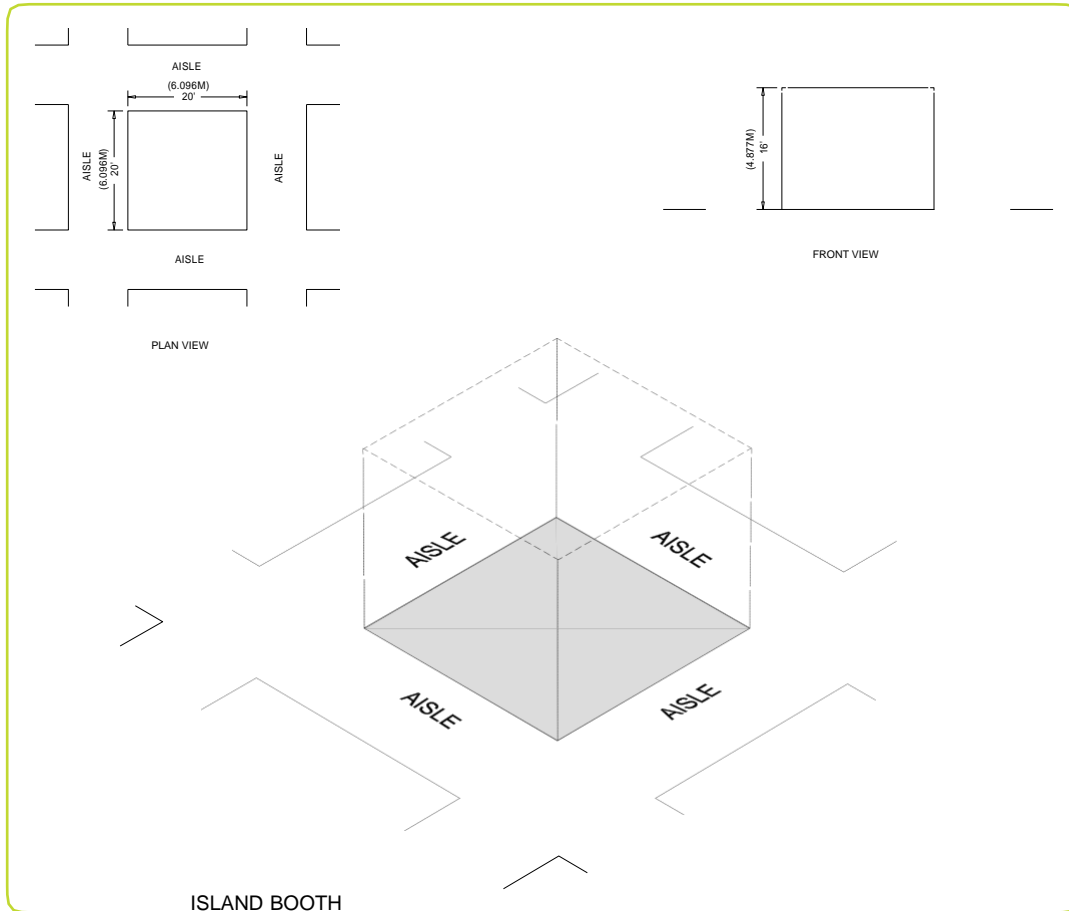
### Dimensions and Use of Space

The entire Cubic Content of this booth may be used, up to the maximum allowable height, without any back wall Line-of-Sight restrictions. A typical maximum height allowance is 16ft (4.88m), including signage. The entire Cubic Content of the space may be used up to the maximum allowable height. Double-sided signs, logos and graphics shall be set back 10ft (3.05m) from adjacent booths.



## ISLAND BOOTH

An Island Booth is any size booth exposed to aisles on all four sides.



### Dimensions and Use of Space

An Island Booth is typically 20ft by 20ft (6.10m by 6.10m) or larger, although it may be configured differently. The entire Cubic Content of the space may be used up to the maximum allowable height, which is usually 16ft (4.88m), including signage.

## CUBIC CONTENT STYLE

Cubic Content style allows exhibits to fully occupy the width, depth and height of the booth footprint. For example, a 10ft by 10ft (3.05m x 3.05m) booth would be allowed to utilize the full volume of the cube of a 10ft wide (3.05m) x 10ft deep (3.05m) x 8ft (2.44m) high area.

It is the choice of the Organizer to allow use of full Cubic Content in linear exhibit space or to observe the Line-of-Sight set-back rule. It is common at certain types of exhibitions or events to eliminate the Line-of-Sight requirement for Linear, End-cap, and Peninsula Booths that back up to Linear Booths. This permits exhibitors to utilize the full Cubic Content of the booth.

Organizers that utilize Cubic Content in Linear Booths do so for one or all of these reasons:

- Cubic Content is more conducive to certain types of product displays or experiences.
- Cubic Content maximizes the exhibit space and investment.
- Generally, exhibitions outside North America utilize Cubic Content making the show friendlier to international exhibitors.
- Cubic Content reduces the need to police exhibits to enforce Line-of-Sight setback rules.

Use of Cubic Content may create situations where the Organizer must address exhibits that have unfinished walls. A determination must be made as to responsibility for finishing these unfinished walls.

It is prudent for the Organizer considering Cubic Content to examine the concerns, advantages and disadvantages prior to putting Cubic Content guidelines into practice. It is often wise to consult with the exhibition's Exhibits Advisory Board or perhaps conduct a focus group of the exhibition's or event's exhibitors to determine their interest and gain their feedback and support for the concept. Organizers must be proactive in communicating with exhibitors and understand the effect it will have on the exhibition or event.

To learn more about Cubic Content, read the [IAEE White Paper: Evaluating and Implementing Cubic Content into Linear Exhibit Space](#).

## OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

### REMOTE-CONTROLLED DEVICES

Products such as remote-controlled cars, drones, planes, helicopters, robots, etc. are to be demonstrated in a safely controlled area of the exhibit floor (i.e. Demonstration Area). When a remote-controlled device is to be used for the purpose of demonstrating a product that requires use of an area outside of the exhibitor-assigned booth space, the Organizer will provide a Demonstration Area for this purpose. The Demonstration Area should include safe netting or other barrier appropriate to accommodate product(s) being demonstrated and be included on the master floor plan submitted for Fire Marshal approval. Each individual facility reserves the right to determine what constitutes a safe and controlled Demonstration Area prior to final plan approval.

**NOTE for Drone Operation:** Local facility and city ordinances are in effect in most areas and prohibit drone activity near the public or in public spaces. The accepted drone default regulation is the [FAA Small UAS Rule Part 107](#) which requires drone operators to obtain a Remote Pilot Certificate. Commercial regulations often require permits and insurance.

## CANOPIES AND CEILINGS

Canopies, including ceilings, umbrellas and canopy frames, can be either decorative or functional (such as to shade computer monitors from ambient light or to allow for hanging products). Canopies for Linear or Perimeter Booths should comply with Line-of-Sight requirements. (See “Use of Space” for Linear or Perimeter Booths).

The bottom of the canopy should not be lower than 7ft (2.13m) from the floor within 5ft (1.52m) of any aisle. Canopy supports should be no wider than three inches 3in (.08m). This applies to any booth configuration that has a sight line restriction, such as a Linear Booth. Fire and safety regulations in many facilities strictly govern the use of canopies, ceilings and other similar coverings. Check with the appropriate local agencies prior to determining specific exhibition rules.

## HANGING SIGNS & GRAPHICS

Most exhibition and event rules allow for Hanging Signs and Graphics in all standard Peninsula and Island Booths, usually to a maximum height range of 16ft to 20ft (4.88m to 6.10m) from the top of the sign, or as determined by the Organizer. End-cap Booths do not qualify for Hanging Signs and Graphics. The distance is measured from the floor to the top of the sign. Whether suspended from above, or supported from below, they should comply with all ordinary use-of-space requirements. For example, the highest point of any sign should not exceed the maximum allowable height for the booth type. (An exception to this rule is made for Perimeter Booths, which can have a 12ft [3.66m] backwall but max sign height can be 20ft. [6.10m]. See page 2 Perimeter Booth for diagram.)

Hanging Signs and Graphics should be set back 10ft (3.05m) from adjacent booths and be directly over contracted space only.

Approval for the use of Hanging Signs and Graphics, at any height, should be received from the Organizer at least 60 days prior to installation. Variances may be issued at the Organizer’s discretion. Drawings should be available for inspection.

## TOWERS AND MULTI-STORY EXHIBITS

A Tower is a free-standing exhibit component separate from the main exhibit fixture. The height restriction is the same as that which applies to the appropriate exhibit space configuration being used. Fire and safety regulations in many facilities strictly govern the use of Towers. A building permit or safety lines may be required.

A Multi-story Exhibit is a booth where the display fixture includes two or more levels. In many cities, a Multi-story Exhibit requires prior approval by the exhibit facility, and/or relevant local government agency, as well as the Organizer because it is deemed to be a “structure” for building purposes. The city building department generally needs to issue a building permit based on an application and drawings prepared and submitted by a licensed architect or engineer. Exhibitors should obtain local building regulations early on to ensure that all time constraints are met. Organizers should be prepared to assist exhibitors in this application process.

It is recommended that Organizers require exhibitors to provide engineering stamped documents for all Multi-story Exhibits and towers over 8ft (2.44m) in height. If engineering stamps are not required, exhibitors using these types of structures should, at a minimum, provide drawings for inspection.

## ISSUES COMMON TO ALL BOOTH TYPES

### U.S. AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

In the U.S., all exhibiting companies are required to be in compliance with the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and are encouraged to be sensitive, and as reasonably accommodating as possible, to attendees with disabilities. Information regarding ADA compliance is available from the U.S. Department of Justice ADA Information Line (800) 514-0301, and from the ADA website at [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov).

Some examples of how to design an exhibit for ADA compliance:

- Make exhibits wheelchair accessible by ramping raised exhibit flooring without extending a ramp into the aisle. Note: a standard wheelchair ramp should have a grade no steeper than 1:12. This means that for every inch of rise (change in height), there should be 12 inches of run (change in length). Ramps should have a minimum width of 36 inches.
- Ramp the entry or use hydraulic lifts to trailer exhibits.
- Avoid double-padded plush carpet to ease mobility device navigation.
- Provide the same attendee experience on both levels of a two-story exhibit.
- Offer a signer or other auxiliary hearing-impaired apparatus for sound presentations or have a printed copy of the presentation available.
- Run an audio presentation for people with sight problems.
- Arrange touch screen displays at a height to accommodate a person sitting in a wheelchair.

To avoid potential fines by the U. S. Department of Justice, exhibitors must adhere to the ADA rules. Exhibits are not exempt from ADA compliance.

### STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

All exhibit displays should be designed and erected in a manner that will withstand normal contact or vibration caused by neighboring exhibitors, hall laborers, or installation/dismantling equipment, such as fork lifts. Displays should also be able to withstand moderate wind effects that may occur in the exhibit hall when freight doors are open. Refer to local building codes that regulate temporary structures.

It is recommended that all exhibits 20ft by 20ft (6.10m by 6.10m) and larger require a drawing, plans or renderings, preferably digital, to be submitted to the Organizer, and to the show's Official Services Contractor.

Exhibitors should ensure that any display fixtures such as tables, racks, or shelves are designed and installed properly to support the product or marketing materials to be displayed.

## FLAMMABLE AND TOXIC MATERIALS

All materials used in display construction or decorating should be made of fire retardant materials and be certified as flame retardant. Samples should also be available for testing. Materials that cannot be treated to meet the requirements should not be used. A flame-proofing certificate should be available for inspection. Exhibitors should be aware of, and must adhere to, all local regulations regarding fire/safety and environment.

Exhibitors should dispose of any waste products they generate during the exhibition in accordance with guidelines established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, or the appropriate government entity in the country the exhibition will be held, and the facility.

## HAZARDOUS WASTE

Hazardous waste requires special arrangements to be prepared in advance of event dismantle with either the facility or a local independent disposal company. Exhibitors are responsible for all costs associated with such specialized removal.

## STORAGE

Fire regulations in most exhibit facilities prohibit storing product, literature, empty packing containers, or packing materials behind back drapes or under draped tables. In most cases, however, exhibitors may store a limited supply of literature or product appropriately within the booth area, as long as these items do not impede access to utility services, create a safety problem, or look unsightly.

## ELECTRICAL

Every exhibit facility has different electrical requirements; however, minimum guidelines are suggested:

- All 110-volt wiring should be grounded three-wire.
- Wiring that touches the floor should be “SO” cord (minimum 14-gauge/three-wire) flat cord, which is insulated to qualify for “extra hard usage.” It is particularly important for exhibitors to use flat electrical cord in under-carpet installations.
- Cord wiring above floor level can be “SJ” which is rated for “hard usage.”
- Using zip cords, two-wire cords, latex cords, plastic cords, lamp cords, open clip sockets, and two-wire clamp-on fixtures is not recommended and is often prohibited. Cube taps should be prohibited.
- Power strips (multi-plug connectors) should be UL approved, with built-in over-load surge protectors.
- Local code commonly requires access to electrical cords and connections along the back wall of exhibit booths; typically, the back 9 inches of the space should remain accessible for this purpose. (This would apply to all booth types with a back wall.)

To better understand electrical at exhibitions, see the CEIR article [Demystifying Electrical Services for the Exhibitor](#).

## LIGHTING

It is important to remember that lighting issues need to be identified as early as possible during the move-in process so they can be addressed and corrected while the necessary equipment is still available on the show floor and booths can be accessed.

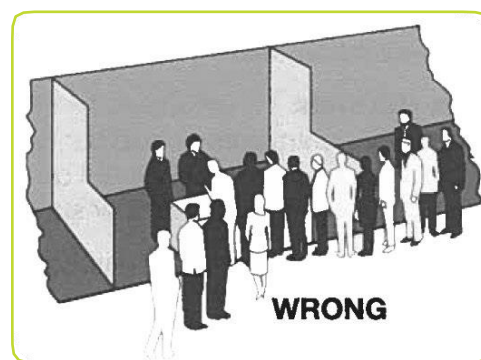
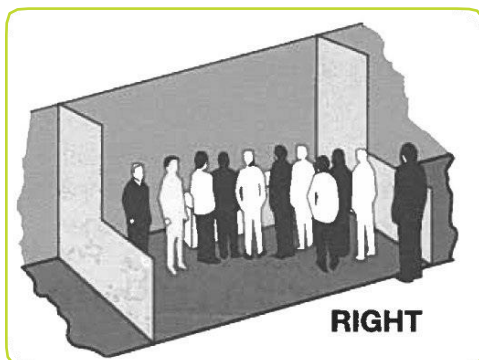
Exhibitors should adhere to the following suggested minimum guidelines when determining booth lighting:

- No lighting, fixtures, lighting trusses, or overhead lighting are allowed outside the boundaries of the exhibit space. Exhibitors intending to use hanging light systems should submit drawings to the Organizer for approval.
- Lighting should not project onto other exhibits or exhibition aisles. Lighting, including gobos, should be directed to the inner confines of the booth space.
- Lighting that is potentially harmful, such as lasers, ultraviolet lights or flashing or strobe lights that can trigger photosensitive epilepsy should comply with facility rules and be approved in writing by the Organizer.
- Lighting that spins, rotates, pulsates, and other specialized lighting effects should be in good taste and not interfere with neighboring exhibitors or otherwise detract from the general atmosphere of the event.
- LED lights can be very bright yet generally generate less heat.
- Currently, some convention facilities are not allowing certain types of quartz halogen lighting fixtures in exhibits due to potential fire hazards.
- Reduced lighting for theater areas should be approved by the Organizer, the utility provider, and the facility.

## DEMONSTRATIONS

As a matter of safety and courtesy to others, exhibitors should conduct sales presentations, product demonstrations, press conferences and other media events in a manner which assures all exhibitor personnel and attendees of such in-booth events are within the contracted exhibit space and not encroaching on the aisles or neighboring exhibits. Any queue lines formed for exhibitor customer interaction must also be contained within the booth footprint. It is the responsibility of each exhibitor to arrange displays, product presentation, audio visual presentations, and demonstration areas to ensure compliance with all other previously listed rules and regulations. Exhibitors should be aware of, and adhere to, local regulations regarding fire/safety and environment.

Special caution should be taken when demonstrating machinery or equipment that has moving parts, cooking equipment with an open flame, or any product that is otherwise potentially dangerous. Exhibitors should establish a minimum setback of 3ft (.91m) and/or install hazard barriers as necessary to prevent accidental injury to spectators. Additionally, demonstrations should only be conducted by qualified exhibitor personnel.



## SOUND/MUSIC

In general, the use of sound equipment in booths is permitted as long as the noise level does not disrupt the activities of neighboring exhibitors. Speakers and other sound devices should be positioned to direct sound inward (to be contained within the booth) rather than outward (toward aisles and other exhibitor booths). Generally, sound and noise should not exceed 85 decibels when measured from the aisle immediately in front of a booth. If an exhibitor or attendee is standing within ten feet of an exhibitor's booth and cannot carry on a normal voice-level conversation, the noise source is too loud. (Refer to the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Act [OSHA] at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) for more information.)

Exhibitors should be aware that music played in their booths, whether live or recorded, may be subject to laws governing the use of copyrighted compositions. Authorized licensing organizations, including but not limited to [ASCAP](#), [BMI](#) and [SESAC](#), collect copyright fees on behalf of composers and publishers of music. It is the exhibitors' responsibility to be informed of copyright laws and submit fees to the appropriate organizations.

## VEHICLES

Rules for display vehicles vary widely depending on the facility and local fire and safety regulations. Compliance with fire, safety, the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other city, county, federal, and provincial government requirements is the responsibility of the Organizer.

Important Note: Always check with local exhibition service contractors and/or the facility for all requirements regarding display vehicles.

Below are a few common examples of display vehicle regulations:

- Display vehicles must have battery cables disconnected and taped, and alarm systems deactivated.
- Fuel tank openings shall be locked or sealed in a manner to prevent escape of vapors through filler caps.
- Vehicles shall be limited in the amount of fuel that can remain in the tanks; specific amounts vary but one example is no more than one-quarter the tank capacity or a maximum of five gallons of fuel, whichever is less.
- Fueling or de-fueling of vehicles on the facility premises is prohibited.
- Once placed, display vehicles may not be started or moved without the approval and direction of show management.
- Auxiliary batteries not connected to engine starting system may remain connected. External power is recommended for demonstration purposes. No battery charging is permitted inside buildings.
- Combustible/flammable materials must not be stored beneath display vehicle. There may be no leaks underneath vehicles.
- It is not recommended that Organizers hold or take possession of display vehicle keys during the event. However, it is recommended that an official policy be established for the handling of vehicle keys which might include identifying booth contacts with mobile numbers should vehicles need to be moved in an emergency or some other unforeseen situation.

## ADVISORY NOTES TO EXHIBITION ORGANIZERS

### FIRE EQUIPMENT

Fire hoses, extinguishers, and audible or visual devices for fire alarms should be visible and accessible at all times.

### HANGING SIGNS

Although these Guidelines indicate 16ft to 20ft (4.88m to 6.10m) as a maximum height range to the top of the sign, some exhibitions permit other heights, or have no height limit. However, most Organizers do impose height limits. Caution should be exercised so exhibitors will not compete over air space for hanging signs. (See page 2 for details and a diagram for hanging signs in Perimeter Booths.)

Exhibitors should be advised to install “hanging points” at the time of manufacture of the sign or display. It is also advisable to have Hanging Signs labeled and cased separately so that they can be easily identified on-site as they usually must be installed before other exhibit construction can begin.

### HARDWALL BOOTHS

Exhibitions that provide Hardwall Booths should specify if these structures can be used for display and attaching products.

### PERIMETER OPENINGS

Local fire and/or facility regulations may require larger exhibit booths to have a certain number of openings within the perimeter walls for safe egress. Regulations vary with each location, but one example would be to provide, at a minimum, one 6ft (1.83m) wide opening every 30ft (9.14m).

### PIPE AND DRAPE

These are commonly used at exhibitions and events in the United States to define exhibit space. Organizers often include in their rules and regulations that this equipment is not intended as a display fixture. Therefore, product and signs should not be attached or affixed. Measurements of booths must allow for size of pipe on sides and back.

### PRODUCT HEIGHT

Some exhibitors have products that exceed display height restrictions. Organizers should establish guidelines for displaying such products. For example, some exhibitions or events require that these exhibitors reserve only perimeter space. Products exceeding height restrictions for Islands and Peninsulas are usually permitted, providing they are displayed in operating mode, and the names and logos, etc. on the product are as it is sold. NOTE: Any special height variances allowed should apply only to those products represented, produced or manufactured by the exhibitor and would not apply to ancillary display or marketing items (such as promotional flags, signs, etc.).

### HEIGHT VARIANCES

Height Variances may be issued for all types of booths. However, in a Linear Booth, the back side of any structure over 8ft (2.44m) must be free of trademarks, graphics and/or logos. Tall flags or markers on the front aisle of Linear Booths are prohibited. Pop up tents or canopies may be allowed but must follow all local fire and facility regulations.



## ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Exhibitions and events, by their very nature, create waste. Properly managed, exhibitions and events can recycle excess materials and supplies in useful and meaningful ways, and they can do so using methods that result in minimized impact on the environment. Exhibits should utilize recycled, renewable and energy efficient materials whenever possible. Exhibitors planning to dispose of, or leave behind, any property from their booth must make arrangements with the Official Services Contractor for disposal and all appropriate and applicable fees will apply.

### **GUIDELINES FOR DISPLAY RULES AND REGULATIONS 2019 TASK FORCE**

Thomas Corcoran (Task Force Chairperson) – Corcoran Expositions, Inc.

Larry Arnaudet – ESCA

Tom Cindric, Jr., CEM – Informa Exhibitions

Jonathan “Skip” Cox – Freeman

Christine Fletcher, CEM – Encore! Event Management

Heather MacRae – Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association

Kelly Miller, CMP, CEM – International Sign Association

Pamela Kay Pietrok – GES

Jamie Reesby, CEM – Access Intelligence LLC

Linda Lizardi Rubin, CEM – Shepard

Chuck Schwartz, CEM – ConvExx

Dennis Smith – Messe Frankfurt North America

Rachel Thomas, CEM – National Business Aviation Association

Terry VanConant – M3S Management, LLC

Russell Wingard, CEM – Freeman

John D. Zinn, CEM – Industry Consultant