

[News / Event Venues](#)

Convention Centers in North Carolina, Maryland and Missouri Earn GBAC Star Accreditation

The coronavirus cleaning and prevention program is being pursued by more than 3,000 facilities across the world, including hotels, convention centers and airports.



by [Elise Schoening](#)

October 6, 2020

0



The Charlotte Convention Center is one of two venues in North Carolina that recently earned GBAC Star certification. Photo Credit:Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority

Coronavirus and Meetings

[Head here](#) to see Northstar Meetings Group's comprehensive and continuing coverage of how the pandemic is affecting meetings

Updated Oct. 6, 2020.

A new certificate program from the [Global BioRisk Advisory Council](#), a division of the worldwide cleaning-industry association [ISSA](#), could help the meetings industry rebound from the coronavirus crisis, and enable large face-to-face events to resume safely when the time is right.

The [Georgia World Congress Center](#) in Atlanta was the first convention center in the nation to complete the GBAC Star program in late June. Since then, a growing number of hotels, convention centers and cities have followed.

Get the latest on coronavirus, the meetings industry & more

Get the latest on coronavirus, the meetings industry & more

I accept the [Terms and Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

ADVERTISEMENT

Among the latest to join the list of certified venues are the [Raleigh Convention Center](#) in Raleigh, N.C.; [Charlotte Convention Center](#) in Charlotte, N.C.; [Baltimore Convention Center](#); and the [America's Center Convention Complex](#) in St. Louis.

"It is with great satisfaction and pride that we announce the Center's GBAC Star accreditation," said [Peggy Daidakis](#), executive director of the Baltimore Convention Center. "This accreditation is an important step in ensuring that the Center is equipped to safely welcome in-person events back into our facility when the time is right. It clearly signals to our clients, business partners, attendees and staff that specific protocols, policies and procedures have been put in place with their safety and well-being in mind."

Other facilities to achieve GBAC Star status include the [Anaheim Convention Center](#), [Los Angeles Convention Center](#), [Las Vegas Convention Center](#), [McCormick Place](#) in Chicago, [Orange County Convention Center](#) in Orlando, [Ernest N. Morial Convention Center](#) in New Orleans and the [Walter E. Washington Convention Center](#) in Washington, D.C.

More than 3,000 facilities in 66 countries are seeking GBAC Star accreditation. This includes convention centers, hotels, convention and visitor bureaus, and even airlines and airports. [American Airlines](#) is seeking to become GBAC Star-certified as part of a series of [new initiatives](#) to combat Covid-19. The company aims to receive full accreditation for all of its aircraft and customer lounges. In addition, the [American Association of Airport Executives](#) is partnering with GBAC to get airports across the nation accredited, so people will feel safer when traveling. The [Dallas Fort Worth International Airport](#) and the [Palm Beach International Airport](#) in Palm Beach, Fla., recently became the first two airports in the nation to complete the certification program

"We're excited to see so many organizations commit and follow through to earn GBAC Star accreditation," said GBAC executive director [Patricia Olinger](#). "Whether it's an airplane, hotel property, expansive event space or a local foodservice establishment, GBAC Star provides the necessary knowledge, tools and resources to meet the new standard of cleanliness and limit future outbreaks."

What Is GBAC Star?

The GBAC Star program is designed to teach venue-cleaning professionals how to prepare for, respond to and recover from infectious diseases and biohazards. GBAC's scientific advisory board, who are experienced in the area of microbial-pathogenic threat analysis and mitigation, created the program. The experts hail from Harvard, Penn State and Emory universities, as well as governmental agencies. Many also have experience working with or consulting with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Facilities will gain accreditation when they show they are implementing the industry's highest standards of cleaning for COVID-19, and are safe to welcome guests and hold events. The program is backed by 10 industry organizations, including the [International](#)

Most Popular



[Creative Ways to Liven Up Digital Events](#)



[5 Things That Can Kill a Virtual Presentation](#)



[8 Tips for Effective Hybrid Events](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

[Association of Venue Managers](#), [International Facility Management Association](#), [International Association of Exhibitions and Events](#), [Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association](#) and the [Go LIVE Together Coalition](#).

"We recognize that safety is a primal instinct and people are not going to get on the plane, go to the airport, travel to the hotel or go to the convention center unless they feel safe," said [Richard Simon](#), CEO of [United Service Companies](#), which provides cleaning, staffing and other services to hotels, venues and trade shows. The company has been working closely with GBAC and ISSA on the new sanitization standards. "Having the GBAC Star program is kind of like having a universal seal of approval that a facility is subscribing to the highest standards in the industry and they've been prescribed by infectious disease control experts."

How Do You Get Certified?

In order to be considered a GBAC Star facility, a venue must have at least one staff member complete the [GBAC fundamentals certificate course](#). The online course, which takes two to three hours to complete, covers everything from proper procedures and training to the chemicals, equipment, tools and personal protective equipment that are necessary for preventing and responding to infectious diseases. The course is available to ISSA members for \$150 and to nonmembers for \$300.

Facilities must also complete an [online application](#) and demonstrate compliance with the [20 GBAC Star program elements](#), which include risk-assessment and risk-mitigation strategies, personnel training, and inventory control and management. Applications will be reviewed and approved by the GBAC Accreditation Council.

According to Simon, the GBAC protocols will be updated regularly. In addition to the fundamentals course, the organization has compiled specific standards for hotels. Protocols that have been tailored to convention centers are expected to be released shortly.

"As you subscribe to GBAC, you will be getting real-time information that attendees need to wear a mask when they come to the convention center and social distancing is in effect," said Simon. "GBAC will be telling the event organizers in the facilities that hand-sanitizing units should be placed at every x hundred feet and that there should be so many per meeting room based on meeting-room capacity. They will also write a complete protocol for taking the temperatures of employees and everybody coming into the facility."

Hotel Companies Seeking GBAC Star Certification

Hyatt was the first hotel brand to commit to the GBAC Star accreditation. In coordination with GBAC, the company plans to roll out a performance-based cleaning, disinfection and infectious-disease prevention program at its more than 900 hotels worldwide. According to the hotelier, every Hyatt property will have at least one hygiene manager on staff. Hygiene managers will be responsible for ensuring the hotels adhere

to the company's new protocols, which include increased cleaning frequency, enhanced food safety and hygiene standards, and ongoing training and certification programs.

"The world as we knew it has been fundamentally changed by COVID-19 and when we are all ready to travel again, we want to make sure that every Hyatt colleague and guest feels confident that each aspect of our commitment is designed with their safety in mind, and that we're putting their well-being first," said Hyatt CEO [Mark Hoplamazian](#), in a statement. "To do this, we must critically examine the hotel experience from every vantage point -- from our rooms and our lobbies to our spas and dining -- bringing in the latest research, technology and innovation to make that happen."

The Leading Hotels of the World, a luxury hospitality organization that represents more than 430 hotels and resorts worldwide, has also signed on. The hotel brand will pursue GBAC Star certification as part of its new "[Healthy Stays](#)" initiative. The company is also working with medical experts to develop enhanced hygiene standards and best practice guidelines for its member hotels.

Committed Convention Centers, CVBs and More

The list of organizations committing to the GBAC Star accreditation continues to grow. Among the convention centers that are working towards accreditation are the [Phoenix Convention Center](#), [Music City Center](#) in Nashville and the [Austin Convention Center](#) in Austin, Texas.

[According to David Dubois](#), president and CEO of the [International Association of Exhibitions and Events](#), the GBAC Star designation is particularly attractive to convention and visitors bureaus. Cities that can boast a convention center as well as multiple hotels and event venues that have been GBAC-certified will likely be more attractive to meeting planners, especially in the early phases of resuming face-to-face events. Thus far, Dallas; Las Vegas; Columbus, Ohio; Palm Beach County, Fla.; Baltimore; and Grapevine and Frisco, Texas, have all signed on.

[Visit Dallas](#) and the [Dallas Tourism Public Improvement District](#) announced in early May that the [Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center](#) and several city-owned venues [will be part of its GBAC Star certification efforts](#). Las Vegas followed suit, with the [Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority](#) and [Las Vegas Convention Center](#) announcing plans to pursue the certification.

In Columbus, Ohio, a citywide initiative is underway. According to the city's CVB, [Experience Columbus](#), at least one partner in each of the event-venue, transportation, lodging and attractions sectors has signed on. Meanwhile, in Florida, the Palm Beaches plans to have more than 150 hotels GBAC Star-certified, along with the local convention center, airport and a handful of cultural institutions. More cities, venues and industry associations are expected to join as the GBAC Star program continues to gain steam, according to Simon.

"It'll be a gold standard, and it should be because it's scientifically based and endorsed," said Simon. "We've already certified dozens of technicians, and we're certifying more every day. What we're doing here with GBAC is making people feel safe, so they actually come to an event. Announcing you're going to have an event is great, but without exhibitors or attendees, it can't happen. They're the lifeblood, so we need to make sure the exhibitor and the attendee feel safe to come."

TAGS ► [BUSINESS TRAVEL](#), [CVBS](#), [HOTELS AND RESORTS](#), [CORPORATE TRAVEL](#), [TRADE SHOWS](#), [TRAVEL](#), [SITE SELECTION](#), [CALIFORNIA](#), [HYATT](#), [CONVENTION CENTERS](#), [DISEASE](#), [CORONAVIRUS](#), [COVID-19](#), [IAEE](#), [ANAHEIM](#)

ADVERTISEMENT



- [News](#)
- [Destination Guides](#)
- [Planning Tips & Trends](#)
- [Incentive](#)
- [Planning Tools](#)
- [Events Calendar](#)
- [Career Development](#)
- [Best Of](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Advertise With Us](#)
- [Terms](#)
- [Privacy](#)
- [Newsletter Signup](#)
- [Magazine Subscriptions](#)

Northstar Travel Media Sites

- [Meetings & Conventions](#)
- [Meetings & Conventions Asia](#)
- [Meetings & Conventions China](#)
- [Successful Meetings](#)
- [Incentive](#)
- [Meeting News](#)
- [SportsTravel](#)
- [Retail Travel](#)
- [Travel Technology](#)
- [Corporate Travel](#)
- [Hotel Investment](#)
- [Data Products](#)
- [Star Service Online](#)
- [See all Northstar Brands](#)

Copyright © 2020 by Northstar Travel Media LLC. All Rights Reserved. 100 Lighting Way, Secaucus, NJ 07094-3626 USA Telephone: (201) 902-2000