



# **MeetSAFE®**

## **Health and Wellness Policy**

# MeetSAFE® Health and Wellness Policy

## Introduction

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Our vision is to develop a Health Protection/Safety policy which will safeguard the health and safety of meeting attendees. This policy is based on CDC guidance and proven “best practices” drawn from what has been learned during the current pandemic. Our strategy, presented here, is robust and comprehensive. It is designed to create multiple layers of protection against infection of COVID-19 and its variants and assure the safety of all meeting attendees.

Our vision has a core principle recognizing vaccination as the key component in assuring attendees’ wellness. We will be asking about the vaccination status of all attendees and guest at registration. We will be collecting the vaccination cards for all attendees and registered guest participating in the meeting prior to the start of the meeting. A negative PCR test, taken within 48 hours of badge pick up, will be accepted in place of vaccination cards for attendees and guests.

The guidance presented here covers all aspects of the meeting including, but not limited to, general sessions, breakout sessions, meals, hospitality areas, networking opportunities and all other aspects of the meeting participation. The broad goal of this policy is to keep you healthy while you attend and prevent any transmission of COVID-19 and its variants. Please cooperate with the protocols presented to ensure that the meeting is safe, rewarding, informative, and beneficial for all those who attend.

## Requirements

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All attendees and guest who are participating in person must be fully vaccinated or provide proof of negative PCR test, taken within 48 hours of picking up your badge. Vaccination cards must be uploaded to Safe Expo prior to the start of the meeting.

## Recommendations

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- The meeting venue should respond to the pre-conference Venue Health and Safety Assessment in a timely fashion.
- All CDC, State, and City COVID-19 regulations and protocols should be strictly adhered to.
- Appropriate signage regarding hand sanitizing, spacing, and traffic flow should be in place when attendees arrive. Hand sanitizing stations should be strategically located throughout the meeting areas.
- Touch points throughout the meeting space should be frequently sanitized. This includes the registration area, all bathrooms, as well as meeting room surfaces. Attendees should be encouraged to avoid any unnecessary touching of their surroundings.
- When attendees leave the venue, they should continue to practice good preventive hygiene and sanitize their hands immediately upon returning to the hotel.

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## Pre-Meeting Risk Assessment

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The following steps should be taken prior to the meeting:

1. All attendees and guest will complete the Health Questionnaire prior to coming to the meeting to assure the wellness of all participants.
2. The Venue Health and Safety form will be completed by the Venue Manager.
3. Any high- risk situations identified by the Venue Health and Safety form should be addressed with the venue management.
4. The outside agency, Safe Expo, will be handling the collection of vaccination cards. Safe Expo will inform staff as to how they will handle the collection process and how they will notify Tressa Patrias, Director of Meetings of participants who are vaccinated.

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Please take the following requirements into consideration as you plan for your participation in the 2022 Meeting.

1. Based on the January 1, 2022, CDC updates the following requirements apply. If you are fully vaccinated, you are not required to wear a mask during the meeting, however we strongly encourage everyone to wear a mask.
2. Be mindful of others personal space and show respect for those who wish to social distance.
3. Registration can be a frustrating experience especially during the current epidemic. Please allow plenty of time to get through the lines that inevitably develop at a conference of this size. Our on-site staff will assist in keeping appropriate physical distancing. Please exhibit patience and help all attendees stay healthy.
4. Safe room capacities will be monitored and strictly enforced. If a meeting room has reached its capacity, we ask that you choose another session to attend.
5. Hand sanitizing stations will be available throughout the venue. Please make sure to use them frequently.
6. The HVAC system in the venue meets or exceeds CDC mandated levels. The air filters are of the MERV 8 specification and will assure a fresh and wholesome air quality environment.

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## When You Arrive

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1. Disposable masks will be available.
2. All attendees will need to first check in at the Health & Safety kiosk to verify their vaccination card was received and approved. There will be a designated line for those providing a negative PCR test that was taken within 48 hours of picking up your badge. A government issued drivers license, ID or passport will also be required at the Health & Safety kiosk.
3. Registered guest will only be allowed to participate in the closing party, with a paid ticket and proof of vaccination and a government issued driver's license, ID or passport.
4. Those who are vaccinated but did not upload their vaccination card prior to arriving will need to present their vaccination card along with proper ID at the Health & Safety kiosk for verification.
5. Wash or sanitize your hands frequently.
6. Avoid handshakes wherever practical.
7. When a cough or a sneeze is unavoidable, please cover the cough or sneeze with your sleeve or elbow and not your hand.
8. Be mindful of others personal space and show respect to those who wish to social distance.

## During the Meeting

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1. If you become ill during the conference, please stay in your room. Medical personnel are available to assist you if necessary.
2. There will be more spacing in all meeting rooms with limits on the number of people that can be in a room at any given time. Please do not move tables or chairs in any of the rooms.
3. We will be cleaning and sanitizing high touch points throughout the meeting.
4. Nightly disinfecting will take place to sanitize all seating, restrooms and other frequently touched surfaces.
5. During the conference, report any illness or COVID related concerns to Tressa Patrias, Director of Meetings. [tpatrias@scisoc.org](mailto:tpatrias@scisoc.org)

## Food and Beverage

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1. Dining space will be increased to facilitate distancing. Tables will be frequently sanitized.
2. Dedicated staff will carefully monitor flow and crowd control of dining areas and the hospitality room.
3. It is strongly recommended that exhibitor samples be distributed for sampling in single serve, compostable cups, or alternative single serve packaging. Any unused samples should be properly discarded.
4. Tables in eating areas are arranged by hotel staff to assure proper distancing. Please do not move tables together.
5. We ask that you refrain from sharing any food or beverages throughout the duration of the meeting.

## After the Meeting

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1. If you get COVID-19 or a variant within 10 days after the meeting please contact Tressa Patrias, Director of Meetings, as soon as possible. [tpatrias@scisoc.org](mailto:tpatrias@scisoc.org)

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## Pre-travel Health Questionnaire

Attendance at and participation in the 2022 Meeting is subject to compliance with the policies and requirements of the CDC, the State, and City in which the meeting is held, as well as the policies of the meeting venue.

During the COVID-19 epidemic, The American Phytopathological Society is making the necessary adjustments and prioritizing the health and well-being of all participants. The requirements of the CDC and other governmental agencies remain fluid as the challenge of variant strains of the COVID-19 virus appear. You will be informed of any relevant changes to CDC policies beyond the January 1, 2022 updates prior to the meeting.

In order to ensure everyone's health and wellness, we are asking all participants to complete this questionnaire prior to traveling to the meeting. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

- 1) Do you currently have a fever? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- 2) Do you currently have a sore throat? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- 3) Do you currently have a dry cough? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- 4) Do you have a runny nose? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- 5) Have you experienced shortness of breath or trouble breathing? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- 6) Have you recently been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or one of its variants?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
- 7) Have you recently had a loss or reduction of your senses of taste or smell? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- 8) Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19 or one of its variants? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you responded "yes" to any of the questions, we strongly advise you to get a COVID-19 test prior to traveling to the meeting. In the summer, many people experience allergies to tree or flower pollen or other allergens which can cause symptoms similar to those of COVID-19. It is possible that if you have any of the above-mentioned symptoms, you are experiencing allergies. We strongly recommend that you find out for certain about the cause of the symptoms you are experiencing by taking a COVID-19 test.