

# Dealing With Difficult Situations

## Possible Situations:

- Individuals who attend (prior and during the show) to gather incriminating evidence.
  - Vulnerable areas include: loading ramps, animal holding pens, animal handling facilities (such as fitting areas), display pens, show ring staging areas, controversial displays.
- Individuals (alone or in groups) who ask sensitive or difficult questions of exhibitors, staff, volunteers or spokespeople.
- Leafleting: includes placing disparaging stickers, flyers, literature on or at displays and in public areas such as washrooms, entrance doors, etc.
- Verbal confrontations: loud accusations or arguments directed at exhibitors or staff designed to draw public attention.
- Demonstrations: may be orderly or disruptive (civil disobedience); may be quiet or vocal. Usually involve signs, banners and/or costumes/props. Media may be in attendance.
- Criminal damage: vandalism, threats of harm to persons or property, animal release.



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### **Be Prepared:**

- Minimize your risk. Keep your house in order: ensure exhibitors abide by your standards.
- Respond to visitor complaints. Take appropriate steps to resolve problem situations quickly and inform the complainant of your actions.
- Be prepared. Prepare public information materials; designate a crisis management team with assigned roles and responsibilities; follow crisis action plans in the event of protests.
- Have spokespeople prepared to deal with the media.
- Ensure staff, volunteers and exhibitors know what steps to take in the event of problems.

### **Dealing With Difficult People:**

- Remember who your audience is: don't provide the public attention and platform they desire.
- Avoid arguments or confrontations. Stay calm, polite and courteous.
- Diffuse the situation: divert their attention, involve them in discussion, or end the discussion.
- Politely but firmly ask them to leave. Call security or appropriate supervisor if necessary.
- Specific suggestions: "Do you have a specific question?" or "Perhaps Mr. X could help you" or "I'm sorry you feel that way" or "I'm afraid I can't share your opinion". Then turn your attention to someone or something else or remove yourself.



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