

idaExpo®

3 organizations, 1 historic show

IDAExpo 2019
Indianapolis Convention Center
Show dates: March 13-16, 2019
Exhibit dates: March 15-16, 2019

For decades, the International Door Association, the American Fence Association, and the National Ornamental & Miscellaneous Metal Association hosted their respective trade shows at different times throughout the year. That's all about to change.

For the first time, the IDAExpo will be held in conjunction with AFA's Fencetech and NOMMA's MetalFab. The combined trade show will be held at the Indianapolis Convention Center in Indianapolis, Ind., March 13-16, 2019.

Why combine Expo, Fencetech, and MetalFab?

For years, various organization leaders and committee members have tossed around the idea. Paul McManus, former IDAExpo chair from 2012-2018, said, "After many discussions, the boards realized we had many things in common. We have similar attendees, similar exhibitors, and equally top-notch education and training programs. By combining the shows, we are offering something new for both the IDA and AFA members and catering to attendees and manufacturers that work in both industries."

AFA executive director Tony Thornton said, "It was an effort to bring attendees together to offer diversification to their companies. Many are already doing most of what is being exhibited, so bringing the fence, ornamental, and door trades together under one roof was an easy decision.

"When I reached out to the executive directors of NOMMA and IDA to see what they thought about the concept, it was an overwhelming 'Why wouldn't we?' type of attitude, and the planning began." Thornton said that next, executive directors from each organization proposed the concept to their respective boards and obtained approval to pursue the opportunity.

NOMMA was the first to embrace the idea when they agreed to be a co-located partner with AFA in 2017.

Setting the stage

AFA and NOMMA joined forces in 2017 and 2018 for their Fencetech and MetalFab events. The success of these previously co-located shows played a role in the decision to combine this year's event.

Thornton said that the relationship that NOMMA and AFA have developed by combining their shows has been beneficial for both organizations ... not only savings and shared expense opportunities, but in the great scheme of things.

NOMMA executive director Liz Messner said, "The synergy from NOMMA and AFA joining forces to hold their annual conference together is unique. Our associations complement rather than compete with each other. NOMMA and AFA members benefit greatly from the collaboration."

Persuasive factors

The fluctuating and declining attendance for all industry trade shows for the past few years also helped drive the decision. According to McManus, "The IDAExpo has always been a healthy show for the attendees, exhibitors, and the IDA."

After the 2007-2009 economic downturn, the IDA board and Expo committee noticed declines in attendance for all types of conventions, including those of IBS, NAHB, AFA, and IDA. Thus, they began examining possible reasons for the decline and brainstorming ways to turn things around.

McManus said they also considered how new generations might not recognize the importance of attending conventions when they have online resources like websites, blogs, and forums.

Rolling the dice

"We took a chance and placed an emphasis on increasing the quality and quantity of education and training during Expo. Attendance to educational seminars started to increase year over year, and overall attendance to the Expo started to increase as well," McManus said.

"IDA's decision to partner with AFA and NOMMA for this year's show is another chance—and, hopefully, one that will pay off for all three organizations."

Feeling optimistic

Organizers seem optimistic about the attendance for the upcoming show and, considering the advantages the co-located show offers and the preliminary numbers, it's clear why. Registration for attendees is up, and remaining exhibitor booth space is limited. Host hotels are also selling out quickly, indicating Indianapolis could be the place to be in March.

"In addition, cooperative marketing and promotion efforts appear to be positively influencing attendee and exhibitor registration," Thornton said.

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SAVE THE DATE!

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You're invited to the largest event in the industry's history: IDAExpo, AFA FENCETECH and NOMMA's METALfab take over Indianapolis in 2019.

WHY ATTEND IDAEXPO?

- ▶ Educational workshops help to boost your knowledge, sharpening your competitive edge out in the field.
- ▶ IDAExpo exhibitors are focused on the latest product innovations that can strengthen your processes.
- ▶ Peer-to-peer interaction and networking provides valuable insight into industry trends.

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Everyone saves money

One of the obvious benefits of a co-located event is that travel expenses, for everyone, will be significantly reduced. Traveling to one show instead of three saves attendees on expenses for airfares and hotels. Registration fees are reduced, and consolidating travel time means missing fewer days at work.

“Exhibitors love the concept because several (manufacturers) exhibit at all three events. With a co-locate, they will save a tremendous amount of money to only have one show annually instead of three,” Thornton said. For exhibitors, not only will travel expenses be minimized, but shipping costs, material handling charges, and booth fees will also be considerably less.

More to see and do

Attendees should expect a much larger exhibitor floor, with over 300 booths and 70-80 seminar options. According to Thornton, “AFA historically has about 4,300 attendees, NOMMA has about 500, and IDA has about 3,000, so we anticipate a total attendance of +/- 7,000. When you combine the three industries, it provides an overwhelming opportunity for an attendee.”

In addition, manufacturers recognize this is a unique opportunity to showcase their products to a new audience. Likewise, dealers curious about products in crossover industries may be inspired to attend this show because of the diverse options it offers.

McManus said, “We considered that some attendees dabbled in multiple industries and that some manufacturers did the same. Both IDA and AFA are looking to try something different for their membership.”

Education opportunities

The 70-80 educational seminars offered by the Institute of Door Dealer Education and Accreditation (IDEA) will not only be comprehensive in scope, they will also be open to all registered attendees. As in previous years, workshops are held on the Wednesday and Thursday of the event (March 13-14) and the exhibits are open on Friday and Saturday (March 15-16) at the Indianapolis Convention Center.

While most seminars will cater to their respective members, some classes are not industry specific. This allows attendees to branch out and gain hands-on knowledge on topics not previously available to them.

IDAExpo-related topics to be covered include sales, financing, personnel

management, and marketing. IDEA will also present an extensive program for technicians.

Come one, come all

There will be an All Conference Party and Auctions event on Friday, March 15, held at the Indianapolis Convention Center Sagamore Ballroom. It will be another unique networking opportunity for all attendees. Dealers and vendors from three different industries will be able to interact in a fun, casual environment. For night owls, there is also an After Party open to all attendees from 10-11 p.m.

The downside

The potential to showcase products to a new audience, the chance to save time and money, and the opportunity to network across multiple industries at one event are all convincing reasons for combining these shows. But is there a downside?

For now, the only negative may be in the logistics of this co-located event. Currently, there are three organizations marketing their individual shows on separate websites under their industry-specific event names. It's not clear where attendees who normally attend more than one show should register.

Also, offering all seminars to all attendees gives them more options, but will they be conflicted when they must choose which educational seminars to attend? Since all seminars are offered on the same two days, attendees will likely have to make some tough choices.

The dilemma

Exhibitors may also find themselves in a quandary. Manufacturers that typically exhibit at more than one show are now forced to either have two booths or choose one side to exhibit on. One marketing coordinator said, “Our company was torn between exhibiting on the door or the fence side. Ultimately, we chose to exhibit on the fence side. We just hope we don't alienate one of our key markets with this decision.”

Only time will tell whether attendees will walk the entire floor and see all that this show has to offer. Typically, attendees seek out the companies or booths they really want to visit. The difference is that this time, they might stumble across an entirely new product or new company on the way.

Visit www.idaexpo.org, www.americanfenceassociation.com/fencetech, or www.nomma.org/page/MetalFab2019 for more information. ■