The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Statement on COVID-19 and NSBE’s Annual Convention

The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) is looking forward to our 46th Annual Convention (#NSBE46), which will take place in San Antonio, Texas, on March 25–29, 2020. The country’s largest annual gathering of Black engineers, #NSBE46 is expected to attract more than 14,000 aspiring and practicing engineers, educators, and representatives of more than 300 academic institutions, government agencies, corporations and nonprofit organizations, all working toward NSBE’s goal of graduating 10,000 new Black engineers annually in the U.S. by 2025.

The novel coronavirus, officially known as COVID-19, is not a current threat to the well-being of those attending the convention. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is not advising any travel restrictions within the U.S. at present, and the Center states that the risk of infection within the United States is now low. We will continue to monitor the situation as it progresses, but at this time, NSBE does not plan to make any changes to its 46th Annual Convention schedule.

San Antonio now has six confirmed cases of the virus. All of the affected individuals are now being held in federal quarantine. All six patients are returnees from the Diamond Princess cruise ship who were evacuated in Japan on Feb. 17 and held in quarantine at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

In an official statement on Feb. 21, the City of San Antonio wrote, “At this time, the risk to the public remains low. Although few cases have been confirmed amongst these quarantined evacuees, the City of San Antonio continues to implement its existing plans with its federal, state and regional partners.”

“Our residents should know that the federally ordered quarantine is functioning as it should. Those evacuees, who are in quarantine on Lackland Air Force Base, who test positive for COVID-19 remain in isolation from the general public and other evacuees,” said San Antonio Metro Health Director Dr. Dawn Emerick in the same statement.

Contact:
Yvette Watson
Senior Manager, Marketing and Communications
Email - ywatson@nsbe.org
Office Number - 703-549-2207, ext. 209
National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) 46th Annual Convention: ‘Our Plan is to Move Forward.’

The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) will move forward and hold its 46th Annual Convention in San Antonio, TX from March 25-29, 2020. NSBE is being proactive in prioritizing communications with attendees and working with the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center to add measures safeguarding participants’ health.
Has NSBE discussed the possibility of postponing the convention?

We will continue to monitor the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and its possible effect on attendance. We expect to move forward as the travel ban only extends to companies coming from China. We have a commitment to keeping attendees informed and updated on emerging information about COVID-19 as well as our efforts to work with the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center. Further, the leading trade show associations — including IAEE, UFI, and PCMA — did not provide any guidance that would lead us to believe that shows in the U.S. should consider postponing or canceling due to the outbreak.

How is NSBE fielding concerns from attendees expressing hesitation?

Given the serious nature of the outbreak, it was very important to us to return every call and email that comes our way. We remain committed to providing members and partners with clear, transparent communication leading up to the convention.

How will you communicate if the event will proceed and allay concerns?

Our team will meet regularly to review and discuss emerging information related to COVID-19 so NSBE leaders will be prepared to answer questions. We will review guidance daily from the World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and have a solid plan leading up to the convention. We will send regular email updates to registered attendees and plan to place relevant information on NSBE.org and Convention.NSBE.org as an additional resource.

Do you think the outbreak will affect any of NSBE’s general sessions or workshops?

We do not think this outbreak will affect NSBE’s general sessions and workshops.

What initiatives have you put in place to help safeguard your attendees from the spread of germs?

We are working with the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center to drastically increase the amount of hand sanitizer stations throughout the convention center, with mobile hand sanitizers specifically provided at registration. In high-trafficked areas like restrooms, the convention center will closely monitor the cleanliness status, increasing disinfectant schedules of bathrooms and public surfaces like railings and door handles, which will be wiped down regularly. There will also be reminders about healthy traveler practices throughout the convention center and hotels. NSBE will encourage all attendees to stay informed on the basic protective measures the public can take, such as the ones listed by the WHO and the CDC. See details below.
Additionally, we will ensure that First Aid personnel are adequately trained and capable of assessing and assisting those that may demonstrate flu-like symptoms and identify local emergency care facilities that will be able to promptly care for attendees that may require immediate treatment.

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About NSBE
With more than 600 chapters and more than 24,000 active members in the U.S. and abroad, the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) is one of the largest student-governed organizations based in the United States. NSBE, founded in 1975, supports and promotes the aspirations of collegiate and pre-collegiate students and technical professionals in engineering and technology.

For additional information on COVID-19, visit the following:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
COVID-19

World Health Organization (WHO)
https://www.who.int/

Department of Health and Human Services
January 31, 2019 HHS press release linking to a video of a press briefing by HHS Secretary Alex Azar and HHS Secretary Azar’s press briefing statement

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