



ESCA's Standardized ID Makes it Easier on All

By Hil Anderson, senior editor

The idea of a national identification badge for trade show labor is one that makes sense for venue managers, service contractors and the workers themselves.

After years of individual badges for every convention center in the U.S., the Exhibition Services & Contractors Association (ESCA) has pulled together the technology and cooperation required to launch a nationwide badging program that many in the industry say has been long overdue; and in the process, was selected for a *Trade Show Executive* 2009 Innovation Award.

"The Worker Identification System (WIS) is something we should have done years ago," said Mark Zimmerman, an

ESCA board member and general manager of the Georgia World Congress Center. "This badge will enable us to closely monitor all access to the facility, and it will help ensure that proper review of all staffing is established and monitored each day."

Under the WIS program, ESCA issues a photo identification card that includes a passive RFID chip, a magnetic strip and a bar code that contain the bearer's name, home city and union affiliation as well as an expiration date. The data is also stored by ESCA in a database that contractors can edit via the Internet, adding or deleting names as necessary and also listing temporary and part-time workers.

The contractors pay the cost of the program and retain ownership of the badges. The program will be launched this Summer in Atlanta.

The bottom line is a tighter ship for contractors and building managers, although ESCA says the badge is not a security badge in that it does not grant instant access to the show floor. Workers must still check in with security upon arrival and obtain a wrist band before they get to work. The WIS badge, however, can verify the workers are who they say they are by matching the information to the database.

"All of us in the hospitality business need to be aware of who has access to our facility and space at all times," Zimmerman said.

Along with the greater sense of security, the badge streamlines the logistics of move-ins. Contractors who send workers from city to city can hand them one badge that will work at many different venues instead of requesting IDs from each building. The workers can also hit the road with one badge instead of having to keep track of a full deck.

There is also an optional timekeeping function that will allow workers to be scanned in when they arrive, which could shave a little time off the process.

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One for All. A national identification card developed by ESCA for trade show workers will alleviate the need for separate badges for individual convention centers. The badges are tied to an ESCA database that confirms the identity of the worker when they arrive at the jobsite.