



January 20, 2021

Dear ASCE Institute, Region, Section, Branch, Younger Member and Student Leaders:

Although the rollout of a vaccine offers hope for a return to normalcy, the coronavirus pandemic and its associated economic hardships continue to challenge our return to “business as usual.” Today, we are writing to thank you once again for your continued leadership during these difficult times and to provide additional guidance on some important operational issues. As leaders, the choices we make for our operations today can position us to emerge from these challenging times more quickly and as a stronger, more effective organization.

As previously communicated, decisions on whether to hold in-person meetings, events, or other activities should be made on a case-by-case basis by the Institute, Region, Section, Branch, Younger Member or Student leadership, consistent with guidance from local, state and federal governments and health officials.

Unfortunately, recent weeks have seen sustained, and even increasing, community spread of the virus. In view of this concern, and recognizing our ethical obligation to protect the public health, safety and welfare, **we strongly encourage you to pursue alternative options, such as the use of virtual platforms for meetings to be held through June 30, 2021.** We also encourage that decisions to conduct an in-person event should be made only if in-person interaction is critical to meet desired objectives and all recommended safety protocols and procedures can be accommodated, in accordance with [CDC guidelines for events and gatherings](#). In addition to prioritizing the safety and health of the public and of potential attendees, virtual meetings can enable broader participation, reduce costs of participation for attendees, and reduce our carbon footprint.

Should you consider conducting face-to-face meetings, please recognize that all face-to-face meetings carry some risk. Measures such as requiring masks and adhering to social distancing may reduce risk but cannot eliminate it. These precautions will be necessary until the rate of community spread has been dramatically reduced, even once most or all participants have been vaccinated. Face-to-face meetings may also expose organizations to liability that may not be covered by insurance, reinforcing the importance of preventive and protective measures including attendee health certifications and liability releases.

Please share this guidance with your related units and members, and please reach out to ASCE General Counsel Tara Hoke at [thoke@asce.org](mailto:thoke@asce.org) if you require legal assistance with meeting contracts and decisions. Note that ASCE staff continue to work remotely, and staff business travel remains restricted, at least until June 30, 2021, with any exceptions requiring Executive Director approval.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been a challenge unlike any other in our professional and personal lives, and we deeply appreciate your willingness to serve our members and the professional community even in the face of such a challenge.

Thank you again for all your efforts as we navigate through this process, and our best wishes to you and your loved ones for continued well-being and a Happy Healthy 2021.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Briaud". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a distinct "Briaud" following.

Jean-Louis Briaud, Ph.D., P.E., D.GE, Dist.M.ASCE  
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas W. Smith III". The signature is cursive and includes a stylized "III" at the end.

Thomas W. Smith III, ENV SP, CAE, F.ASCE  
Executive Director