

**For Immediate Release:**

## **Even Docs Are Worried About Meetings In Swine Flu Zones**

*Knowland Group finds meeting planners would go ahead with meetings in epidemic areas - with precautions!*

Salisbury, MD - April 28, 2009 - The Knowland Group, the world's leader in hotel group intelligence, finds that meeting planners would continue with planned meetings in swine flu epidemic hot zones, even if their members were frightened of contracting the illness. While most meeting planners are worried about attendance dropping, some have considered the possibility of their members congregating in large groups as being dangerous, Knowland found, after calling several event planners whose groups host meetings in the Southwest.

Event Planner Kim Harmon, who plans large meetings for the Texas Medical Association, was preparing a continuing medical educational program for her physicians on protecting themselves with protocols for state-wide reporting, vaccines and where to get the latest information, as she answered the Knowland Group's call. "I have a meeting in Austin tomorrow," Ms. Harmon said, "and I'm worried that attendance will be affected. low." She adds that it's not because she thinks the doctors are apprehensive about catching this virulent strain of flu themselves, but also because they are trained (as front line workers in epidemics) to take as many proactive measures as they can to avoid exposure in the first place. "The standard procedure in these cases would be to NOT meet in large groups," Ms. Harmon noted. She will not rely on the hotel to provide extra safety measures for her members, she adds. Instead, she is planning common sense procedures to avoid exposure between her members and is providing hand gel at registration, in the expo hall, and classrooms.

Meeting planners for the Texas Nurses Association, contacted by the Knowland Group, are so thrown off by the epidemic that they refused to comment, until, they said, they've had time to plan their initial response. Meanwhile, Vita Montalbano, an event planner who sets up large meetings for the Texas School Board Association, told The Knowland Group that she isn't worried about the epidemic affecting her meetings yet; although, she often hosts meetings in Santa Fe, which is relatively close to the epidemic's spreading path. When questioned about whether she would actually cancel a meeting, if Santa Fe became an epidemic hot spot, Ms. Montalbano said she would not. "I know my members would call and ask if the event was going to still be held," she said, "and I would assure them that I had been in contact with the hotel and had asked them to take any necessary precautions, such as serving bottled water instead of having open pitchers, and similar procedures."

Hotels in the Southwest are likely to take a hit, despite the hardy attitude of most of the meeting planners questioned, as this frightening and sudden epidemic spreads upward from Mexico further into the United States.

### **About Knowland:**

Headquartered in Salisbury, MD, The Knowland Group is a premier provider of sales and marketing products and services to the hospitality industry worldwide. Knowland serves over 90 markets within the United States, Canada, and beyond. Single-minded in its goal to add client value, Knowland is a proven innovator, consistently striving to develop market-changing products and services. For more information, visit [www.KnowlandGroup.com](http://www.KnowlandGroup.com) or call 410-860-2270.

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