

WQA Anti-Suitcasing and Outboarding Policy

Last Updated: July 2026



As the leading voice of the residential, commercial, industrial, and small community water treatment industry—representing more than 2,500 manufacturers, suppliers, and dealers worldwide—WQA convenes events that engage the full water quality ecosystem.

WQA is committed to fostering a professional, respectful, and equitable environment for all participants at its events, including members, attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors. To support this commitment, we are strengthening measures to prevent suitcasing and outboarding at our events. This policy outlines our approach and expectations.

Overview of Prohibited Practices

Both suitcasing and outboarding, practices prohibited by WQA at its events, are considered exploitative marketing practices at conferences and trade shows. These tactics involve engaging in business activities without paying for exhibition or sponsorship, which undermines the investments made by official exhibitors and sponsors and detracts from the quality of the event.

What is Suitcasing?

Suitcasing is the act of attending an event to market, promote, sell, or otherwise solicit business, without being a registered exhibitor, sponsor, or approved partner. This unauthorized commercial activity often involves individuals or companies acting as general attendees but actively promoting their business without authorization. This behavior is counter to the business interests of our paying exhibitors and sponsors. Suitcasing may take the form of commercial activity conducted during event hours in the convention center; from a hotel guest room or hospitality suite; or in a restaurant, club, or any other public place.

Examples of Suitcasing:

- Attempting to sell product on the exhibit floor without exhibiting
- Placing marketing materials on tables, counters, or chairs other than within your own company's booth
- Promoting outside events, organizations, or conferences
- Booth sharing with a company or person that is not exhibiting

What is Outboarding?

Outboarding is when someone attends a WQA event and hosts an unauthorized event, meeting, demonstration, or presentation in any space at or near the event, including other hotels, restaurants, or nearby properties, or at their own personal business, during WQA event hours without WQA's consent. Outboarding is prohibited even by paying exhibitors and sponsors.

Examples of Outboarding:

- Offering your own content session without WQA's consent
- Inviting event attendees to a hospitality suite for a product demonstration
- Essentially, holding any type of event/gathering while in town for WQA's event without WQA's consent

Why Suitcasing and Outboarding Are Prohibited

- Diminishes exhibitor and sponsor investment: These practices dilute the value of the investment made by official participants.
- Reduces the value of the official event: Attracting attendees away from the main event diminishes the size and quality of the audience available to paying exhibitors and sponsors.
- Creates confusion and dissatisfaction: Attendees may struggle to differentiate between official and unofficial activities, potentially resulting in a negative experience.
- Undermines the event's legitimacy: Such tactics can damage the credibility of the event itself.

SUITCASING AND OUTBOARDING ARE PROHIBITED ***WQA EMBRACES A ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY***

Seeking Approval

To avoid outboarding, WQA must be informed of any separate activities or events during the event hours, and you must receive WQA's express written consent before hosting the event. For the avoidance of doubt, the 2027 WQA Convention & Expo event hours are:

Wednesday, April 28 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Thursday, April 29 8:00 am – 6:00 pm

Friday, April 30 8:30 am – 2:00 pm

To seek approval for an activity you desire to host, please complete [this form](#).

WQA will evaluate all properly submitted and sufficiently detailed requests and will consider, among other things, the nature of the request, whether the requester is a member or paying exhibitors/sponsor of the event, and the value of the proposed activity to the event and the WQA community. All decisions by WQA are at WQA's sole discretion and are final.

What Happens if Someone Violates this Policy?

WQA leadership will investigate all complaints and will take appropriate action. Violations of this policy are taken seriously. If an individual or company is found to have violated this policy, WQA may take any or all of the following actions:

- Immediate removal from the event without refund.
- Prohibition from attending future WQA events.
- Assessment of penalties, including potential fines.
- Termination of membership or sponsorship privileges, where applicable.

Reporting Violations

All attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors are encouraged to report suspected violations of this policy. Reports may be made directly to WQA staff onsite or via email at convention@wqa.org. WQA will investigate all reports discreetly and take appropriate action as necessary.

Conduct Expectations for WQA Events

To maintain a positive environment, all attendees are reminded of the following expectations:

- Do not engage in unauthorized solicitation or promotion.
- Respect the boundaries and property of exhibitors and sponsors.
- Do not tamper with or remove items from other exhibitors' booths.
- Do not share event credentials with unauthorized individuals.

Acknowledgment

By registering for or participating in a WQA event, all attendees, sponsors, exhibitors, and guests agree to comply with this Anti-Suitcasing and Outboarding Policy