

TACO

# News

## TACO's Fall Meeting Attracts Over 100 Park Operators!

by Jeff Crider

**More than 100 park operators gathered at Yogi Bear's North Texas Jellystone Park Camp-Resort in Burleson, Texas, Sept. 25th to attend the Fall Meeting of the Texas Association of Campground Owners (TACO), according to TACO officials.**

The daylong meeting included seminars on ways to reduce liability exposures with service dogs, strategies for increasing revenue with yield management, which some call "rate optimization," as well as government affairs updates from Texas Rep. Jeff Leach, District 67, and Matt Krause, District 93, of the Texas House of Representatives, and Ron Hinkle, TACO's longtime legislative consultant.

Meeting attendees also got to enjoy networking opportunities over lunch catered by Babe's, a guided tour of the North Texas Jellystone Park, and self-guided tours of award-winning parks nearby.



*Attendees to TACO's Fall Meeting were able to tour parks, take in educational seminars and hear of a host of legislative updates.*

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"It was a fabulous meeting and we were thrilled with the very high level of attendance," said Brian Schaeffer, TACO's executive director and CEO, who told Leach and Krause about how park operators have been hit with massive increases in property taxes in recent years.

Krause said Texas voters will have the opportunity to vote on 10 constitutional amendments in the November election, one of which would prohibit the imposition of an individual income tax in Texas, while another would give the state legislature the ability to temporarily exempt properties damaged by disasters from property taxes, but he said park operators would need to work with their local taxing agencies concerning property tax rates.

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# Your TACO Board

## IN ACTION

- › The TACO Board met in September. They elected new offices for the upcoming fiscal year.
- › The board also reviewed the 3rd Quarter financials and approved them. Oct. 2018-May 2019 was an outstanding year. We exceeded the pro-rated annual budgeted income so far for our fiscal year as well as net profit, and we believe this will carry through to year-end.
- › A new budget for Oct 2019 through Sept 2020 was discussed and approved using 3 prior years' benchmarks including recommendations and performances. The overarching issues were to invest in legislative and legal arenas to promote and protect member rights.
- › The TACO legal team is working on a wide range of members concerns about guest relations – trespass, theft of services, eviction, etc. to utility billing, licensing requirements and taxation.
- › Several new problems are facing members including ADA lawsuits of website compliance. TACO is working with its legal team and industry web providers to determine reasonable courses of action to avoid litigation and become compliant.
- › The 2020 TACO Guide will be closed out soon for membership listings and display advertising. The new book will be every bit as impactful as previous publications due to size / content, quality compilation / printing and distribution.
- › Planning for the TACO Spring Show at the new location in Lake Conroe is well under way and going nicely with preliminary information available at TACOMembers.com.
- › The board was updated on the TACO Parks On Tour Meeting coming up immediately following the board meeting and the participation is at record levels.
- › Ron Hinkle briefed the board on legislative action from the previous session and what our priorities are for the 'off-season' that will be headlined by property taxes and regulatory infringements on our industry.
- › The board approved a strategic alliance with a front-office / online reservation company called Aspira.

› The ARVC convention dates were confirmed as Nov 4 – 7 in Knoxville, TN. TACO will be there and be active in various state association management functions just prior to the ARVC convention.



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# What you need to know about the ADA and your website

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## Is my website ADA compliant?

The ADA and how it relates to the internet and websites has been a hot topic this year. For those that haven't followed this specifically, there are a huge amount of lawsuits that have increased over the last few years for websites of businesses, including tourism that is considered public accommodations not being ADA compliant with their websites.

The questions everyone has is, what makes a website ADA compliant and how do I know if mine is? If you are asking that question, chances are that your website isn't ADA compliant. A recent study by WebAIM was done on the top 1 million website home pages with an automated tool and 97.8% of those had some sort of WCAG 2 error. What does that mean...they more than likely are not ADA compliant and therefore at risk of being sued if they are considered a public accommodation.

While there are other articles that have been written giving some kind of guidelines for what makes a website ADA compliant, this article is more about some of the things you need to know about ADA compliance and not necessarily the technical side.

### What about Automated Testing Tools?

There are quite a few automated testing tools for ADA compliance for your website. However, those tools are not completely accurate and are usually tied to a provider that will attempt to fix the issues for you for a certain price. Some can give you some basic information, but it takes a real audit of your website from a real person to make sure it is ADA compliant.

A sample of issues to look for is making sure that your text on the page is fully visible and not blending into the background. Also, make sure that the pictures on the website have appropriate alternative (alt) text tags – explaining what the photo is and how it coincides with the section it appears. You want to make sure that any forms on the website have appropriate tags (popping up) explaining what needs to be entered on the forms.

### What is the State of Texas doing about these lawsuits?

There is some good news for business owners in the State of Texas. According to our Legislative Consultant, Ron Hinkle, after

meeting with the general counsel and executive director of Texans for Lawsuit Reform, as of September 1, 2017, Texas enacted HB 1463 which amended the Human Resources Code to require a claimant filing or intending to file an action alleging a failure to comply with applicable design, construction, technical, or similar standards relating to accommodating persons with disabilities to give written notice of the claim to the respondent by a specified deadline before the date the action is filed. What this law does, is it requires a claimant to detail an alleged violation and request a cure of the violation within 60 days. This should stop any attorneys from sending demand letters that are scaring a business owner into settling for a certain amount of money. The main thing to remember is that if you receive a letter from an attorney, do not throw it out. Make sure to read it and get with your web developer or someone that knows what they are doing to make the necessary changes in order to avoid any litigation. Once the changes are made, you need to respond to the notice and alert the attorney who sent the letter of the changes made to the website.

### What's my next move?

There are many more items that could be covered and we will do that in a longer forum. The reality is that no website, much like no physical site, will ever be 100% compliant. But this isn't an excuse for non-compliance. So, if you need help with getting your website compliant or at least moving in the right direction, please get in touch with your web provider or contact us via email or phone at [info@txadinternet.com](mailto:info@txadinternet.com) or by calling 817-426-9395. We can either assist in making your current website more ADA compliant or upgrade you to a new ADA friendly website that will likely increase your market exposure at the same time.





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TACO has been encouraging its members to hire tax mitigation companies, such as Dallas-based P.E. Pennington & Co. Inc., to fight to reduce their property taxes.

"We are encouraging all of our members to protest (property tax increases)," Schaeffer said. "If you protest, whatever the outcome is, your taxes are frozen for two years. We think the protest is the way to go."

Schaeffer added that the more businesses and residents contest their local property tax increases, the less likely local jurisdictions will fight, simply because of the logjam created by such protests.

While state legislation does not address local property tax issues, Leach said it's important for park operators to vote, particularly for politicians who will keep taxes low. He added that Texas's state representatives are getting a lot of work done.

"When you look at the state of Texas, there is a lot to celebrate as opposed to Washington," he said.

In addition to discussing taxation issues, TACO's Fall Meeting included a presentation by Lance Goff, a vice president of Philadelphia Insurance, who discussed liability issues involving service dogs and emotional support animals.

Goff said park operators can only ask two questions of guests with service dogs:

- "Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?"
- "What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?"

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service dogs do not have to be professionally trained or certified, Goff said. Someone can legally train their dog themselves, he added. ADA also does not require service animals to wear a vest, ID tag or have a certain type of harness.

TACO will be adding new language to its Legal Handbook on this topic and details such as whether service dogs need to be leashed.

Goff also said guests with service dogs must be allowed in all communal food areas, cabins and other common areas. No pet deposits or special cleaning fees can be charged for these animals, either.



*continued on page 15*





# Upcoming RV Shows and Events

## 2019

**Nov 4-7** . . . . . ARVC OUTDOOR HOSPITALITY CONFERENCE & EXPO, Knoxville, TN

**Nov 10-14** . . . . . Jellystone Symposium 2019, Charleston, SC

**Nov 15-18** . . . . . KOA Annual Convention & Expo, Phoenix, AZ

## 2020

**January** . . . . . All Valley RV & Outdoor Show (*details coming soon*)

**Jan 2-5** . . . . . South Texas RV Super Sale, Joe Freeman Coliseum, San Antonio, TX

**Jan 2-5** . . . . . Tarrant County RV Show, Fort Worth Convention Center, Fort Worth, TX

**Jan 3-5** . . . . . Austin Boat & Travel Trailer Show, Austin Convention Center, Austin, TX

**Jan 24-26** . . . . . The East Texas Boat & Travel Trailer Show,  
Maude Cobb Activity Center, Longview, TX

**Feb 12-16** . . . . . Houston RV Show, Reliant Center, Houston TX

**May 5-6** . . . . . **2020 TACO Spring Meeting & Trade Show, Conroe, TX**

## Embrace Glamping!

Younger generations have flocked to glamping, a buzzy term for amenity-packed camping in tents, yurts, and other structures. According to KOA's research, "32 percent of Gen-Xers and 29 percent of millennials say they would like to experience more unique lodging experiences like safari tents." KOA wants to embrace this movement and foresees the campgrounds of tomorrow including luxury tents, lofty treehouses, and underwater cabins.

– Megan Barber

*from RVS, CAMPERS, AND TRAILERS:  
"Here's what the campground of the future could look like"*

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# **GFCI PROTECTION:**

## **A Major Topic of the 2020 National Electric Code Update**

*by Wade Elliott*

The triannual update to the National Electric Code (NEC) is nearly complete and is due for publishing later this year for states and other Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) to adopt and implement at the beginning of 2020. In my state of Washington, the new editions are usually put in place for enforcement at the beginning of the fiscal year, July 1st.

In the 2020 edition's debate and discussion a clear and unmistakable theme comes through – Ground Faults and its increased safety. In the 2017, NEC a rather significant global change was made to a General Section of the NEC requiring that many (branch) circuits have ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection for personnel. The code reads, "all single phase receptacles rated 150 volts or less... 100 amperes or less installed in the following locations...". These locations include "outdoors". From this many AHJ's and inspectors concluded that RV Site Electrical Equipment must have GFCI protection on the 30 and 50 amp receptacles in addition to the 20 amp receptacle where it is already required.

In the 2020 code RV pedestals are explicitly excluded from the need for 30 and 50 amp GFCI protection for the following reasons:

1. The 30 and 50 amp power on the RV pedestal are considered feeder circuits (those circuits that feed

another panel) and not branch circuits. The changes made in 2017 applied to branch circuits such as the 20 amp receptacle on a RV Pedestal, not feeder circuits.

2. The leakage current allowed by UL for GFCI circuits when all the downstream GFCI receptacles are added together would be enough to constantly trip the pedestal GFCI circuit.

In all the discussions the various code panels had during the debate and all the public comments the theme consistently emerging was - with more GFCI protection available, fewer electrical shocks are seen. You can bet that electrical inspectors will be paying closer attention. An electrocution in an RV park, which could have been prevented, could leave the owner or manager open to litigation. The message was explicit; GFCI is now a hot topic. We recommend that you get ahead of the game and install GFCI protection on all circuits where required. NEC article 210.8 (B) is the place to find out where they are required.

Bottom line – the 30 and 50 amp circuits feeding the RV are NOT required to have GFCI protection. Preventing the inclusion of GFCI protection of 30 and 50 amp RV site circuits is a big deal and operators need help to prevent a future push to include them by GFCI protecting circuits that should be protected.





Another safety issue is reverse polarity. Reverse polarity is the switching of the hot and neutral wires in a circuit. Reverse polarity is prevented in personal and home electrical devices by one of the blades on 15 and 20 amp plugs being wider than the other blade. When a wire is crossed in an RV park a number of problems can occur; tripping or even inoperability of GFCI protective devices, damage to sensitive electronic equipment, etc.

In the 2020 code a requirement for a reverse polarity detector was added to the construction of new RVs. This reverse polarity could be caused by a problem internal to the RV, a crossed wire in the RV site distribution or even a problem in a nearby RV on the same circuit. RV park operators ensuring their site electrical distribution has the correct polarity before guests are placed on that circuit can sort out what sounds like a possible can of worms. When your equipment is 'clean' a problem that comes up can now be isolated easier and removed. Here is another spot to get ahead of the game.

The code panel removed the requirement for the 20 amp receptacle to have tamper resistance normally required inside of a home. However, look for the requirement that the 20 amp receptacle to be weather resistant. I would expect to see this required on 30 and 50 amp receptacles in the future.

The 2020 code will explicitly prohibit having more than one 30 or 50 cord feeding an RV. Many people had believed it was implicit in the code already. No RV is manufactured to have more than one cord and unqualified persons have modified RVs that have them. A recent article in the press had recommended replacing the 30 amp receptacle in a pedestal to allow two 50 amp cords to an RV. This violates the NEC in at least two ways;

1. If a 50 amp receptacle is present, a 30 amp receptacle must be present
2. Two cords feeding an RV are prohibited.

This is a safety problem and should never be allowed on your RV site equipment.

Finally, the 2020 code prohibits the use of autotransformers when connected to the RV site

equipment. These autotransformers, sometimes also called a buck/boost transformer, place an additional load on the distribution systems in an RV park and can cause the sites on a circuit surrounding a site using the autotransformer to experience lower voltages from the additional amp flow to the autotransformer. The code article does note that the use of surge protectors is allowed.

For the 2020 NEC cycle many items of concern were clarified and settled in a positive manner for RV park operators. The panel reaffirmed the ground rod issue from recent years, gave operators language to prohibit use of multiple connections and autotransformers to their pedestals and gave notice that operators need to check their distribution system for reverse polarity problems. However, the principal message is that safety and the prevention of electrocutions, by using GFCI protection in many more places than we have seen previously, is recommended. As I mentioned earlier – Get ahead

of the game and install GFCI protection on all circuits where required.

Wade Elliott is the President of Utility Supply Group, Kingston, WA. Wade is a member of the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) National Electric Code (NEC)

Panel 7. Panel 7 is tasked with developing and updating the NEC for Recreational Vehicles, RV Parks, Manufactured Homes and Manufactured Home Communities. Wade represents the National Association of RV Parks on the NEC Panel 7.

*Wizard of  
Watts*



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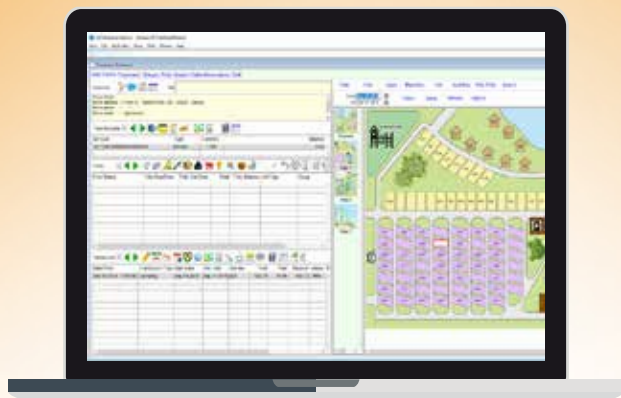
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# TACO's Fall Meeting Attracts Over 100 Park Operators!

*continued from page 6*

Magda Wilcox, reservations manager for the North Texas Jellystone Park, and her daughter, Ryan Vallejo, guest relations manager, provided a session on yield management and discussed how computer programs can be used to raise rates during periods of high demand to generate additional revenue.

The goal, Wilcox said, is "to sell the right room to the right client at the right price."

When customers complain because of a friend or family member who booked the same room or campsite for a lower price, they offer them a one-time discount and caution them that they will be subject to rates based on consumer demand next time.

TACO's Fall Meeting included a networking lunch of fried chicken and chicken fried steak catered by Babe's, as well as a guided tour of the Jellystone Park by General Manager Steve Stafford, who has worked at the park for close to a decade and overseen many of its improvements and expansions, the latest of which have been the addition of new 'red-carpet' RV sites and cabins. The park is currently building a pirate ship with 10 rentable cabin compartments, which it hopes to open next year.

The Fall Meeting also featured self-guided tours of Texas Ranch RV Resort in neighboring Alvarado and Texan RV Ranch in Mansfield. Both parks have won awards in TACO's 2019 park competition.



The Fall Meeting concluded with a brief presentation by Jeff Crider, a longtime IMAHelps board member and volunteer who also works as a publicist for the campground industry and writes for WOODALLSCM.com. Crider formally thanked Schaeffer with a plaque presentation, noting his decade-long support for IMAHelps, a non-profit with no paid staff that organizes the largest medical humanitarian missions in Central and South America.

Crider noted that Schaeffer has not only consistently supported IMAHelps' medical missions through his AGS Cares division, but hosted the non-profit organization's website through his TXAD Internet division during a critical period from 2011 to 2014 when IMAHelps could not afford to pay for website design and hosting services.

"Without a website, we couldn't communicate with donors, let alone recruit more volunteers. You helped us out when we really needed it, and we appreciate it, Brian," Crider said.

The Fall Show was made possible with the support of several sponsors, including Armstrong Software, Astra Campground Manager, Rowley Insurance, and Ulrich Cabins.

**TACO's Spring Meeting & Trade Show is scheduled for May 5-6, 2020 at the Lone Star Convention & Expo Center in Conroe, Texas.**





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