



Good evening friends and FIRST family!

8:00 p.m. March 14, 2020

Oh my goodness, what a couple of crazy days! The Idaho Regional Planning Committee is so very impressed and proud of each and every one of you for your accomplishments this season. We are working tirelessly to get our event rescheduled or to get the thumbs up to continue on with the finalization of plans for our inaugural “I-squared: Idaho Invitational” off-season event this July. We know that everyone has questions and wants to make plans so we will share information as soon as it becomes available. Yesterday I was privileged to be included in the FIRST community call where they spoke about the recent events. Below is the information shared by President Larry Cohen, VP of Field Operations Erica Fessia and Vice President of Programs Chris Rake.

The rest of the season is “Suspended” – PAUSED – until they have a time to breathe and figure out what to do and when to do it. It is NOT a cancellation. The suspension of events is right now scheduled through April. After that there is uncertainty- but they are continuing to plan for the future. They have however cancelled both of the championships in Houston and Detroit. Anyone who has ever planned an event where you have to contract the facility understands that large places that could host such a wonderful group as the FIRST progression of programs can understand the magnitude of trying to coordinate schedules and financing to put such an event together. This cannot be done in a few short months, it takes years. It’s unfortunate but certainly a teaching moment for all of us with regard to understanding, education and empathy. I am thankful for the people at FIRST Headquarters and all that they have endured to this point.

The event listings part of the FIRST website will be updated sometime in the next few days. This will show events either as under review, canceled, or will list an actual postponed date.

- Cost: Will there be refunds?
 - Championship registration fees are going to be refunded. Some are paid in different ways so this will take time until they figure out a correct method for doing it. Be patient. They are doing their best with a situation they have never encountered.
 - Regional refunds are currently under review. There are some who believe that the kit of parts and the “FIRST Experience” of building the robot, solving the challenges and learning as a team equal the registration fee. Others are talking a partial refund (likely a small amount since the kit of parts and shipping cost money). Don’t freak out just yet. Be patient. It will take time but remember you weren’t expecting the money for something else. Here is where your character can shine through and your kindness can turn this into another teaching moment.
 - The official FIRST policy states there are no refunds. However, they are looking into all parts and will make a fair decision because we are part of a really gracious organization! It’s pretty complex.
 - Some of these events are possibly going to be rescheduled.
 - Venues and services require deposits that are not refundable. We are blessed at the Idaho Center with a great, amazing team who has offered to move our deposits to another date. We are waiting for the thumbs up from FIRST to put things into motion.
 - The experience of FIRST is more than just the events.
 - Once they get over the initial nuttiness of having to make the decision to suspend the season, they will get back with us on the financial decisions.

- Rookie status for 2021: This is on their list to address at a later date.
- Teams may continue to meet as long as you are following the guidance of your state, community, school, etc. Things will change as time goes so be sure to keep educated on this for the protection of your community.
- Theme for 2021 season is up in the air. Both FLL Jr, FLL and FTC have completed much of their season (except for the Championship experience) so they are going to have look at what the plan is, both in logistics and timing.
- Dean's list was discussed as a possible online interview along with some of the other awards. They would like some of the awards of the season to continue. This is also on the list to be decided. They hope to have a plan very soon.
- It was asked if the Graduating Seniors would be able to participate at an event after they graduate? They are looking at all the options to recognize the seniors and will be trying to figure that out in the coming weeks.

I put in a request on Thursday evening for the dates approved by the Ford Idaho Center in July to be placed on an addendum with the FIRST HQ folks as well as a request for a field for us to use. I have not heard back on that email yet but feel confident that we are in the pipeline for a reschedule and just need to be patient. As you can imagine, the amazing people at FIRST HQ are super busy right now, completely shaken off kilter and trying their best to do the right thing for you and your teams. Keep the happy thoughts, cross your fingers, say a prayer, toss good thoughts into the universe, whatever it takes. We will get through this and we WILL create great memories for each other when we get together for our annual reunion!

Should we not be able to reschedule the Idaho Regional, we will go ahead and set up the "I-squared: Idaho Invitational" at ISU in Pocatello. We've got some great plans for some really fun stuff. I'm a girl who doesn't take "no" for an answer and am fully working my eyelashes to make things work out! Just know that we will see each other in July!

Feel free to reach out to me should you have any questions. I am available to talk to your team members, feel free to give them my cell phone number and my email. I am available to come and visit your team in person. Sometimes we all just need to be together and know that there is love and understanding in the room even if the world seems twisted.

Sending you all GREAT BIG HUGS and my undying appreciation for all you do for your teams, your community, for the FIRST Idaho programs and for each other! ❤️

Great big air hugs and elbow fives,
Lisa Lalliss-Skogsberg
 Regional Director, FIRST®



For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology
www.firstinspires.org | //lallisskogsberg@firstinspires.org
 Phone: 208.870-6873 | 603.480.5465 ext. 798
 web: idahofrcregional.org | Facebook: idahofrcregional

"In 100 years it won't matter what kind of car you drove, how big your house was, or how much was in your bank account. What will have mattered is that you touched the life of a child." Author unknown