

Sponsorship Handbook

2026 Iowa State Fair: August 13-23

The Iowa State Fair has been our state's greatest celebration since 1854, honoring Iowa's tradition of agriculture, industry, entertainment, and achievement. Thanks to partners like you, the Fair continues to set records, wow audiences, boost our economy, and create lifelong memories for more than one million people from around the world each year. On behalf of the Iowa State Fair staff, Board, and Blue Ribbon Foundation, **thank you** for your support of the best 11 days of the year!

This handbook serves as a quick reference for all need-to-know information about this year's Fair.

Sponsorship Department

Introducing the 2026 Sponsor Relations Intern: Haley Van Zee! She will be a senior this fall at Drake University, majoring in Information Systems and Data Analytics. She is originally from Altoona, IA and is excited to meet and assist you so that the Fair can be a successful and fun event for all.

Julianna Curtis has been the Sponsorship Director since spring of 2022 and is responsible for securing and managing all sponsors for the Fair. As a lifelong champion of the Fair, she believes it is the best reflection of Iowa's rich culture, industries, people, and quality of life.

Feel free to contact either of us with questions. We look forward to working with you!



Julianna Curtis

Sponsorship Director
515-401-1676 office
515-229-1479 cell (best after July 31)
JCurtis@IowaStateFair.org



Haley Van Zee

Sponsor Relations Intern
515-262-3111 x379
SponsorRelations@BlueRibbonFoundation.org

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2026 SPONSOR TIMELINE

June 1

The following items are due, unless otherwise specified:

- Signed Agreement
- Payment
- Certificate of General Liability Insurance (COI)*

June 30

The following items are due:

- [Sponsor Plans & Needs Form](#)
- [Electrical Form](#)*
- [Communications Form](#) (Wi-Fi)*

*for partners with exhibit space

Early July

Credential packages (admission tickets, parking passes, etc.) ready for pick-up or mailed to sponsors who have fulfilled payment.

Sunday, July 13

July Preview newspaper inserts distributed in the Des Moines Register and statewide newspapers.

Monday, July 27 – Wednesday, August 12

Exhibit setup for Sponsors & Vendors (see page 5 for details).

Sunday, August 9

Official Daily Program newspapers distributed in the Des Moines Register across the state.

2026 Iowa State Fair: August 13-23

Wednesday, August 19, 6:00-8:00pm

Sponsor Reception at the Iowa State Fair (invitation sent separately).

Monday, August 24 – Wednesday, August 26

Exhibit teardown for Sponsors & Vendors (see page 8 for details).

Mid-October

Sponsorship Reports and thank-you gifts sent to all sponsors!

November-January

Renewals begin for the 2027 Iowa State Fair.

Mark your calendars!

2027 Iowa State Fair: August 12-22

MARKETING RESOURCES

2026 Theme

Reflecting on “The Spirit of Iowa ’76” (the 1976 Fair which marked America’s bicentennial), the 2026 Fair will celebrate the spirit of America with our own nod to the 250th anniversary – or semi quincentennial – of our nation’s founding. Get ready to show your “**Fair Spirit**” with a theme fit for a once-in-a-generation celebration, highlighting both our heritage and the innovation that will shape our future.



Iowa State Fair Logos

The official Iowa State Fair logos may be used to promote the Fair and the sponsorship. All logo usage must be pre-approved by the Sponsorship Director and follow the design standards as provided.



Stay Up-to-Date

Iowa State Fair App

The best way to stay connected to all the Fair action! Download the app from Google Play or the Apple Store to access the [daily schedule](#), our list of sponsors, and the most up-to-date info.

Iowa State Fair E-News

[Join our email club](#) to get the inside scoop on Fair activities. Emails are sent monthly and daily during the Fair.

Social Media

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)! Tag us in your posts and use this year’s hashtags below:

#IowaStateFair

#NothingCompares

#ISF2026

#FairSpirit

Text Alerts

Receive live updates on the latest news and events! Data rates may apply.

- Text **FAIR** to **844-844-8508** for updates on weather, parking lots, concerts, daily activities, and more.
- Text **BABY** to **844-844-8508** to hear when new babies are born at the Animal Learning Center.

Media

The Media Center is located in the Administration Building basement, open Wednesday pre-Fair and during the Fair from 8am – 8pm. Sponsors may post press releases and make information available here.

Anyone taking photos, filming videos, or doing interviews must have a media badge, which can be obtained in the Media Center. For any content taken in your exhibit space, you will not need a media badge.

PRE-FAIR (FOR EXHIBIT SPACE)

Setup Logistics

Outdoor Exhibits – Setup Timeframe

Monday, July 27 – Monday, August 10: 8am – 4:30pm
 Tuesday, August 11 – Wednesday, August 12: 8am – 9pm

Indoor Exhibits – Setup Timeframe

Monday, August 3 – Monday, August 10: 8am – 4:30pm
 Tuesday, August 11 – Wednesday, August 12: 8am – 9pm

*No vehicles will be allowed inside the Varied Industries Building (VIB) after 4:30pm on Monday, August 10.

*All VIB exhibits may use the south loading bay for load-in. Exhibits in the north half of the VIB may hand cart materials to the north roll-up doors or east roll-up door.

Exhibiting for fewer than 11 days?

Please refer to your agreement and coordinate with the Sponsorship department for setup logistics.

Pre-Fair Access

- **Pre-Fair Passes are required for vehicle access inside the Fairgrounds from Saturday, August 8 – Wednesday, August 12** (provided based on need).
- To avoid heavy congestion on Monday-Wednesday pre-Fair, we recommend setting up the week prior.
- We encourage you to park in Lot A or south of Dean Avenue (no pass required) and walk in if possible.
- The Fair has implemented no parking areas and suggested parking areas for pre-Fair access. See map below for the **Pre-Fair parking areas and gate hours:**

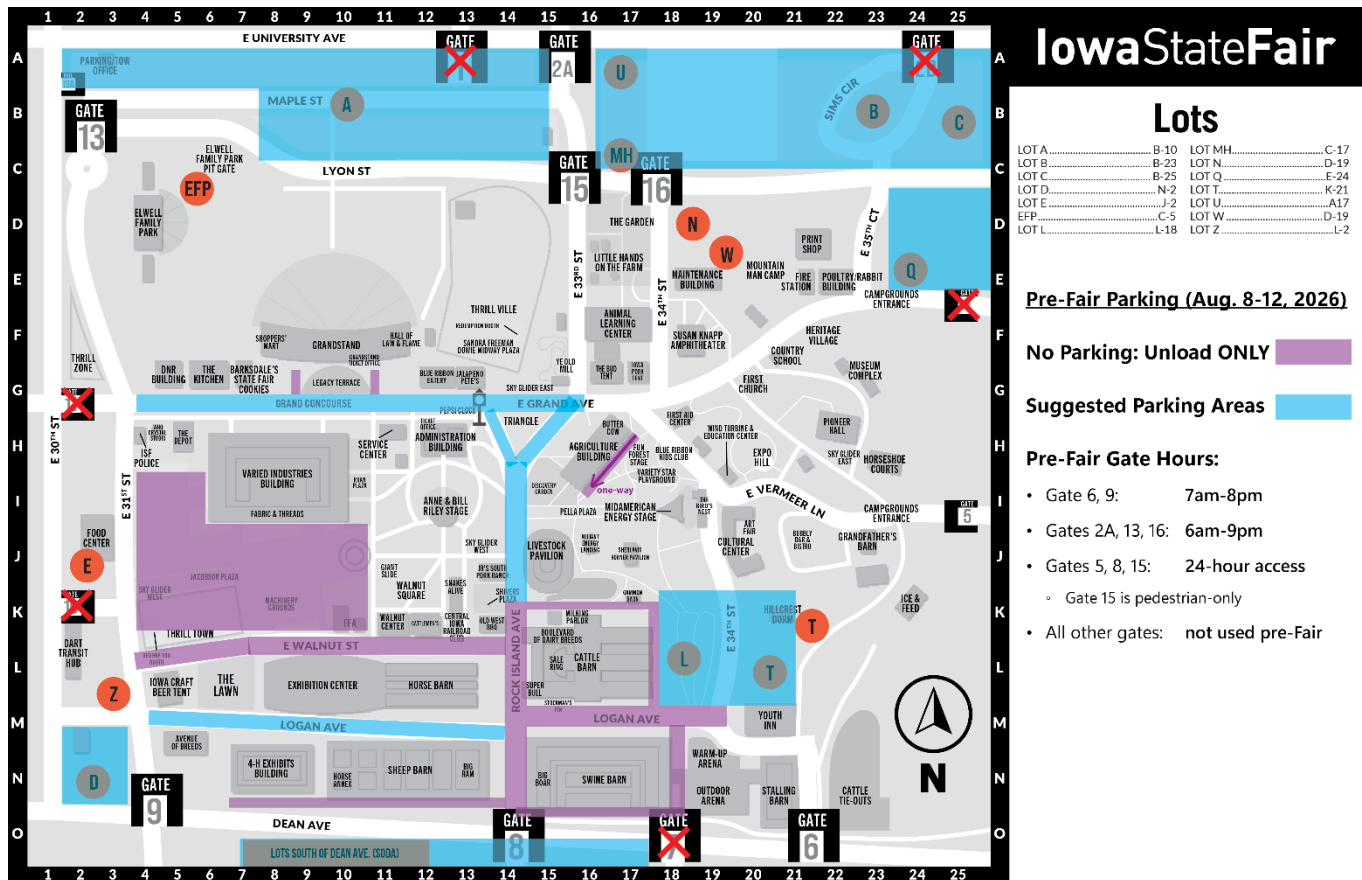


Exhibit Space Needs

Insurance (COI)

Sponsors must provide a Certificate of General Liability Insurance with minimum coverage of \$1,000,000 and the following additional insureds: State of Iowa, Iowa State Fair Authority, Iowa State Fair Board of Directors, its Agents, Officers, and Staff. **Due June 1 and must be received before setup is allowed.**

Rentals

Freeman: the on-site partner for booth products and services (tables, chairs, fencing, fans, carpeting, forklift services, and more). Order assets directly from Freeman's portal **by July 6** for advance pricing: www.freemanco.com/store/show/landing?showID=543047. Questions? Contact Kelsey at 515-720-4390 or kelsey.warfield@freeman.com (email preferred pre-Fair).

Forklifts and Fans: Outside of Freeman, we recommend [Sunbelt Rentals](#) in Des Moines (515-318-6413).

Tents: The Fair does not provide tents for exhibit space. You may supply your own tent or rent from our recommended suppliers: [JP Party Rentals](#) in Ankeny, [Big Ten Rentals](#) in Iowa City, or [Lincoln Tent](#) in Lincoln, NE.

- Tents are not allowed indoors.
- Staking, excavating, digging, and drilling into the ground are prohibited. All tents must be weighted with ballasts, concrete blocks, sandbags, or water-filled barrels. Any special requests need proper clearance from Fair Operations so nothing interferes with underground electrical, telephone, gas, or water lines.

Utilities

The Fair offers electric and Wi-Fi as requested. (Note: only Fair officials are allowed to perform utility services).

Electric: included at no charge. Charges apply only if substantial work is required beyond reasonable needs.

- Please submit requests through the following form **by June 30**:
www.iowastatefair.org/participate/commercial-space/forms/electrical-order-form-sponsors
- During the Fair, report any issues to the Sponsorship Director, who will help coordinate services.

Wi-Fi: included for Varied Industries Building exhibits at no charge; not included for any other exhibit.

- Please submit requests through the following form **by June 30**:
www.iowastatefair.org/participate/commercial-space/forms/communications/communications-order-form-sponsor
- During the Fair, report any issues to the Communications Department at **515-401-1514**.

Ice & Bottled Water

The Foundation's Development Manager will reach out by late July with details about pre-Fair and Fairtime orders. During the Fair, call the Ice & Feed House at **515-262-3111 x292** to place an order between 7-10am.

Ice: 20lb bags of ice may be purchased for \$5 each (when picked up) or \$6 each (when delivered) from Ice & Feed (east side of the Fairgrounds, SE of Grandfather's Barn).

Bottled Water: 24-pack cases of 5.5-liter water bottles may be purchased for \$18 each from Ice & Feed.

- Individual bottles are sold at seven Blue Ribbon Foundation water booths, and many concession stands. Proceeds from sales support the Foundation's mission to preserve and improve the historic Fairgrounds.
- 16 water refill stations are also located throughout the grounds (see [Fairgrounds Map](#) for locations).

Trash and Recycling

The Fair works with our waste removal contractor to promote Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. We encourage the use of cardboard recycling containers (available during setup) and Big Bottle recycling containers (available during the Fair). We will also have periodic pick-up times for flattened boxes during the Fair.

Vendor Rules

Giveaways and Drawings

All giveaways and prizes must be pre-approved by the Sponsorship Director **by July 1**. Please forward a list or pictures of items to JCurtis@IowaStateFair.org.

The following novelty items are expressly prohibited as giveaways: T-shirts, caps, hats, jackets, belt buckles, sunglasses, stickers, stick-ons, bumper stickers, or balloons (inflated or not).

Drawings must take place in the presence of a Fair official. Fairgoers must be informed that completion of an entry form establishes a relationship that removes the patron from the “do not call” list.

Sampling

Food and beverage sampling must abide by the One Bite, Two Sips Rule, or a sample size of 2 ounces or less, and must be pre-approved by the Sponsorship Director **by July 1**.

The following food items are expressly prohibited as giveaways: ice cream, popcorn, hot dogs, chocolate chip cookies, soft drinks, coffee, bottled water, and cups of water.

As long as samples are free, you are not required by Iowa law to obtain a temporary food permit. If you have any questions, please contact Julie Kraling, Retail Foods Program Lead at the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, Food and Consumer Safety Bureau (Julie.Kraling@dia.iowa.gov, 515-689-4718).

Sound

No loudspeaker, amplifier, radio, band, orchestra, musician, or other sound device can be used unless the sound or amplification is confined to the area occupied by the vendor at a level approved by the Fair. Microphones, bullhorns, and megaphones are strictly prohibited.

If noise interferes with neighboring exhibits or stages, the vendor will be asked to reduce volume levels per the discretion of the Iowa State Fair. Failure to adjust as requested may result in expulsion from the Fairgrounds.

The Vendor Rules below must be followed by all sponsors/vendors during the Iowa State Fair, no exceptions:

- All indoor and outdoor exhibits must open by 9am CST and close at 8pm CST each day. There are no late starts or early closings allowed. Exhibits must be staffed 11 hours daily.
- All exhibits must be presented in an attractive fashion and remain totally intact until closing time. Exhibit plans must be pre-approved by the Sponsorship Director.
- ABSOLUTELY NO ROAMING OUTSIDE OF CONTRACTED EXHIBIT SPACE IS ALLOWED. Staff must remain within the confines of the space and may not occupy the sidewalk, aisle, or any areas outside of the space. Please design your exhibit such that Fairgoers engaging with your staff are doing so INSIDE your contracted footprint. If it is necessary to interact over a countertop, the counter must be set back from the edge of the space at least 2 feet to allow attendants and Fairgoers to interact without being in the aisle or sidewalk.
- Distribution of handbills, flyers, coupons, or any other materials outside of the exhibit space is prohibited.
- Distribution of novelty or food items as advertising material will not be allowed unless approval is received from the Sponsorship Director.
- Access to all areas of buildings, aisles, sidewalks, and roads must remain clear and unobstructed.
- All storage boxes and trash must be out of sight. The Fair is not responsible for cleaning or clearing contracted spaces. Trash receptacles are available throughout the grounds. Dumpsters for flattened cardboard and oversized trash are located west of the Varied Industries Building and west of the Fairgrounds Fire Station.
- All drapes, curtains, hangings, hay, straw, or other decorative materials must be flame-retardant as stated by the Iowa State Fire Marshal Code.
- Gas cans, portable liquid propane, and bottle gas tanks are prohibited in all Iowa State Fair buildings.
- No smoking is allowed in any Iowa State Fair building.

- No firearms or weapons of any type will be permitted on the Fairgrounds.
- Any display vehicle brought on grounds must have a very low amount of fuel, taped or locked gas cap, disconnected battery, and removed ignition key as stated by the Iowa State Fire Marshal Code. The vehicle must remain a static part of the display and cannot be moved in or out during the Fair's open hours.
- The use of scooters, skateboards, hover boards, roller blades, roller skates, bicycles, unicycles, and remote controlled vehicles is prohibited on the Fairgrounds.
- Painting, alterations, or attachment (signage, etc.) to any part of the Iowa State Fair's buildings, grounds, or structures (trees, poles, etc.) are prohibited, unless authorized in writing by the Sponsorship Director.
- Spray painting and sidewalk chalk are prohibited.
- Handwritten signs are never acceptable at the Iowa State Fair.
- Animals of any kind are prohibited on the Fairgrounds, except for those entered into shows or that have received the appropriate pass from the Sponsorship Director (e.g. if they are part of an exhibit).
- SPONSOR and representatives must agree that there will be no discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, sex, age, or physical and mental ability from staff at the exhibit and further agree that this Agreement will be terminated by the Iowa State Fair if a violation is found.

For full vendor rules, please visit www.iowastatefair.org/participate/commercial-space/rules-regulations.

Specific to Indoor Booths:

- Sidewalls must not be higher than four feet tall in the front half of the space (closest to the aisle) unless mutually agreed upon by adjoining vendors.
- Tables must be clothed and skirted to the floor. The backs of tables must be covered if visible to the public.
- No part of the booth may extend in the aisle (refer also to the booth's depth as specified in the Agreement).
- Maximum booth height is 12 feet, including signs.
- Delivery hours will be 8am to 9am with no vehicles allowed near the building for the rest of the day.
- Only approved adhesives (Gaffer's tape) may be used for flooring purposes.

POST-FAIR (FOR EXHIBIT SPACE)

Teardown Logistics

No credentials are needed for post-Fair teardown. Please be respectful of other vendors during load-out. Unless otherwise arranged, vendors must remove all items from the Fairgrounds by the closing times below or face a fee of \$500 per day and risk future participation.

Outdoor Exhibits – Teardown Timeframe

Monday, August 24 – Friday, August 28: 8am – 4:30pm

On the last Sunday, August 23, there is **no admission entry/re-entry from 7pm – about 10pm. Teardown may begin at 8pm, but staff must be inside by 7pm. Vehicles may exit the Fairgrounds after 8pm, but vehicles cannot enter until deemed safe by Iowa State Fair Public Safety (likely 10pm – no credentials needed).*

Indoor Exhibits – Teardown Timeframe

Monday, August 24 – Wednesday, August 26: 8am – 4:30pm

**The Varied Industries Building will be secured from Sunday, August 23 at 8pm – Monday, August 24 at 8am, after which you will be solely responsible for your exhibit and items.*

Exhibiting for fewer than 11 days?

Please refer to your agreement and coordinate with the Sponsorship department for teardown logistics.

FAIRTIME (FOR ALL SPONSORS)

Fair Hours

Fairgrounds Hours

8am – midnight (no entry/re-entry after 10pm)

*On the last Sunday, hours are 8am – 9pm (no entry/re-entry after 7pm)

Buildings & Exhibits Hours

9am – 8pm

Thrill Parks Hours

Thrill Ville: 11am – 11pm

Thrill Town: 10am – 10pm

Thrill Zone: 10am – 11pm

*On the last Sunday, all parks close at 9pm.

Gate Hours

Gates 2A, 2C, 4, 6, 7, 9-15: open at 7am with a soft opening at 6:30am for workers

Gates 2B, 5, 8, 16: open 24 hours/day

*Gates open to the public at 8am.

*Most gates close by 1am (except for 24-hour gates).

*Liftgates are located at Gates 4, 5, 13, and 16 and will be closed during Fair hours, with several open overnight for deliveries, cleaning, and emergency vehicles.

Fairgrounds Map

Maps can be found at six main gates, at information booths, in the App, or online here:

www.iowastatefair.org/visit/fairgrounds-map.

Notable Locations

*See [Fairgrounds Map](#) for exact locations.

- **Restrooms:** all major buildings have restrooms and accessible restrooms to accommodate mobility devices. For more information about accessibility, visit www.iowastatefair.org/visit/disability-assistance.
- **First Aid:** The Hy-Vee Health and First Aid Center is located east of the Agriculture Building, and a satellite station is located in the Service Center. Both are staffed by Des Moines Fire and Rescue.
- **Information Booths:** Seven blue huts are located across the grounds and are open from 8am – 8pm.
- **Lost & Found, Lost Children, and Adult Paging:** Lost items, children, or people with special needs or medical emergencies should be taken to the Public Safety Building. Paging is done from 9am – midnight.
- **Ticket Office (front porch of Administration Building):** Open Monday – Friday from 8am – 4:30pm for walk-up orders, beginning July 6.
- **ISF Hub:** All package deliveries will be accepted at the ISF Hub (221 E 30th Street). Sponsors must coordinate directly with their delivery service (UPS, FedEx, Amazon). Additional credentials from the Sponsorship department may also be picked up here (must bring identification).
 - **Pre-Fair hours (starting August 3):** 8am – 4:30pm
 - **Fairtime hours:** 7:30am to 7:30pm

Admission

Anyone entering the Fairgrounds must have an admission ticket or wristband, no exceptions. There will be no refunds for unused credentials. **To purchase additional tickets**, please contact the Sponsorship department (ideally by June 30, before credential packages are sent) or visit www.iowastatefair.org/visit/buy-tickets.

General Admission Tickets

- **Advance tickets:** \$11 for adults (ages 12+), \$7 for children (ages 6-11)
- **Fairtime tickets:** \$16 for adults, \$10 for children
- Free for children 5 and under

Wristbands

\$121 for full-Fair admission – available for staff and vendors. Must be worn each day and fastened securely (if it is not tight enough, admission may be denied and the wristband confiscated).

Hand Stamps for Re-Entry

Guests may leave the Fairgrounds through any gate and request a hand stamp to re-enter the same day at no charge. Re-entry does not apply to vehicles parked in on-grounds lots.

Parking and Transportation

Fairgrounds Address

The Iowa State Fairgrounds is located just 10 minutes east of Downtown Des Moines – find directions at www.iowastatefair.org/visit/directions and stay up-to-date on traffic information at www.511ia.org.

- **Physical Address:** Iowa State Fair, 3000 E Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50317
- **Mailing Address:** Iowa State Fair, PO Box 57130, Des Moines, IA 50317

Park & Ride

Three metro locations offer free parking and convenient shuttle services to and from the Fair with drop-off and pick-up at Gate 10. Shuttles operate daily from 8am – midnight (9pm on the last Sunday).

DART Locations: Round-trip tickets are \$3 for adults ages 11-64; \$1 for reduced fare riders (children ages 6-10, seniors ages 65+, and others); and free for children 5 and under. One-way tickets are available upon request. For more details, visit www.ridedart.com/state-fair/.

- 7th & Center St. Park & Ride: 830 6th Ave. Des Moines, IA 50309
- Iowa State Capitol: E 12th St. between E Grand Ave. & E Walnut St.

CIT Transportation Locations: free for all riders.

- Southridge Mall: 1111 E Army Post Rd, Des Moines, IA 50315

Taxi, Uber, Lyft, & Rideshare

Drop-off and pick-up are at Gate 8 on Dean Ave. (203 Rock Island Ave. Des Moines, IA 50317). Download the Uber or Lyft apps, call 515-282-8111 for a taxi, or call 515-288-7433 for Rideshare.

Parking at the Fairgrounds

- Parking is first-come, first-served. Some lots fill quickly, so if your designated lot becomes full, follow the instructions from parking staff about where to park with your paid pass.
- Each person in a vehicle must have an admission ticket, wristband, or hand stamp to enter.
- Illegally parked cars will be towed at owner's expense to the Impound Lot in the NW corner of Lot A.
- Stay informed on parking lot updates through Text Alerts (see page 4).

Lot A Parking Passes: single-day mirror hangers. Passes are single-use only (no same-day return policy).

*If Lot A is full, you must still enter through Gate 2A off of University Ave. and E 33rd St. to use your paid pass. Parking staff will direct you to Lot B or C instead. Make sure your pass is presented visibly at Gate 2A.

On-Grounds Parking Passes: single or multi-day mirror hangers. Passes are multi-use for the designated lot(s).

Unload/Load Passes: single or multi-day mirror hangers. Passes are multi-use and provide access to unload/load items at the designated location(s).

*Unload/load should take place before 9am. Vehicles must exit the inner grounds immediately after items are unloaded/loaded (i.e. no parking at the designated location is allowed).

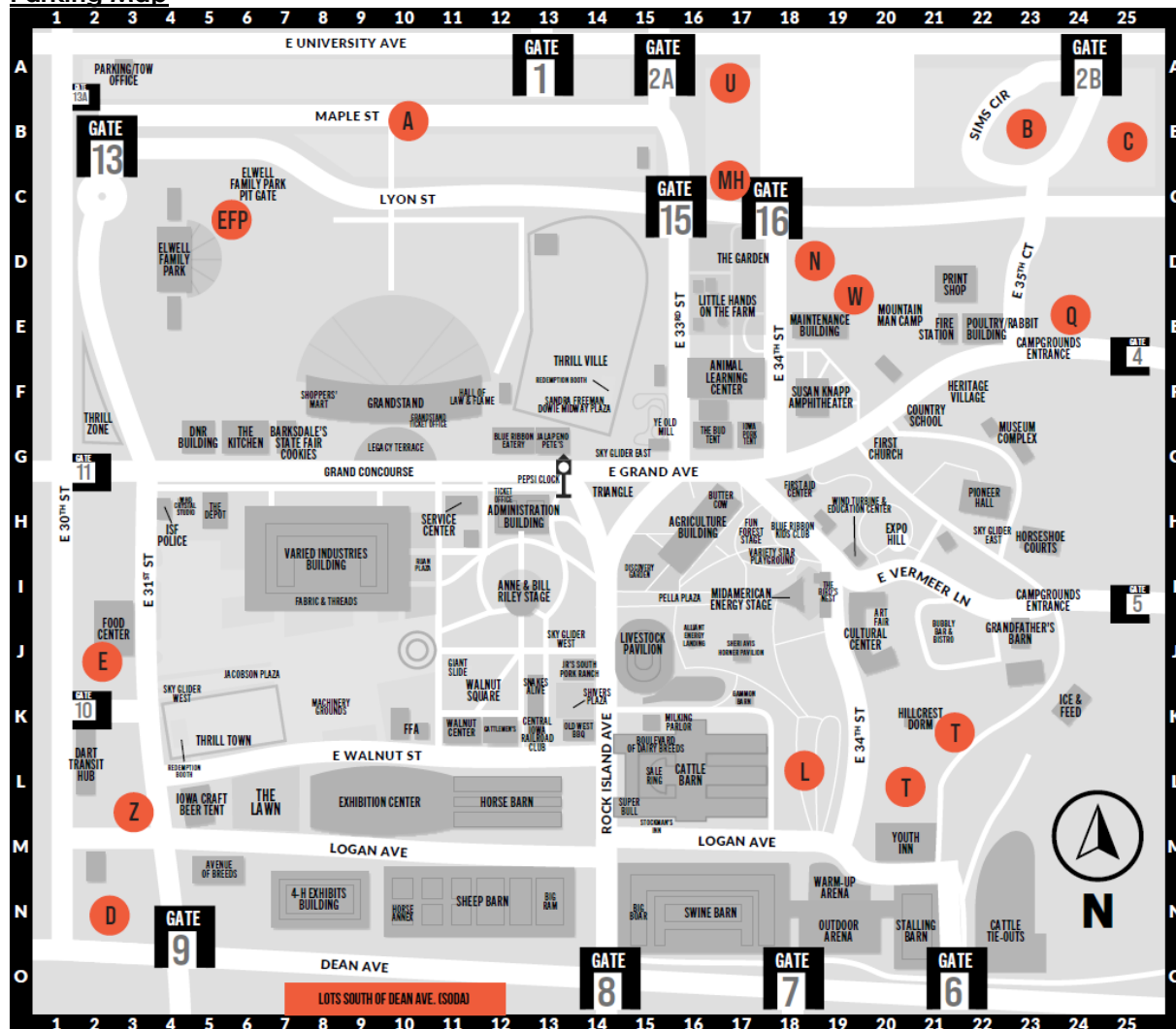
ADA/Accessible Parking: Paved and hardpacked surface parking are available in Lots A, B, and C on a first-come, first-served basis (parking pass required). Proper decals or license plates must be displayed.

Free On-Grounds Transportation

- **Blue Line Parking Shuttles:** 5:30am – 1am, with stops at Lot B, Lot C, Gate 13, and Gate 15.
- **Clearfield Lions Shuttles:** 8am – 11pm, with stops at the First Church, Pioneer Hall, and Campgrounds.
- **Za-Ga-Zig Shriners Golf Cart Shuttles:** 8am – 8pm, with stops at Lot A, Lot B, Lot C, Gate 13, and Gate 15.
- **Mobility Assistance Carts:** 9am – 4pm, with hubs at Gate 10, Gate 11, Cattle Barn, Bud Tent, and Gate 4.

*Golf carts are not available to rent for safety, traffic, and liability reasons.

Parking Map



Safety and Weather

Safety

The Iowa State Fair is proud to partner with Iowa State Patrol, the Polk County Sheriff's Office, Des Moines Police, state and local officials, first responders, and health professionals to ensure top-level safety and 24/7 security across the grounds. See more details at www.iowastatefair.org/safety.

While the Fair does not provide security for specific booths, sponsors may hire their own. We recommend [Per Mar Security Services](#). You can contact their Des Moines branch at 515-244-5660.

Weather

The Iowa State Fair will continue regardless of weather. While we sometimes experience extreme heat or rainfall, we often have mild weather with temperatures in the 70s-80s with occasional days of light rainfall. Please be prepared for all elements and stay informed through Text Alerts (see page 4), The Weather Channel, or Des Moines' local news channels.

When the National Weather Service issues a severe weather warning impacting the Fairgrounds, an announcement will be made over the grounds-wide Public Address System alerting Fairgoers to seek shelter (The PA System is used only for this purpose and for the National Anthem sung live at 10am each morning). The announcement will be repeated every two minutes until the severe weather warning has expired. When lightning is detected within 8 miles of the Fairgrounds, all entertainment must cease operations.

Enjoy the Iowa State Fair!

What's New?

[Check out what's NEW](#) at the 2026 Iowa State Fair, including these exciting [Blue Ribbon Foundation projects](#) and all of the delicious [Fair foods](#)!

Entertainment

With so much to see and do at the Fair, below is a list of "fun" that you just can't miss!

- [Grandstand Entertainment](#)
- [Free Stages and Grounds Entertainment](#)
- [Elwell Family Park Events](#)
- [Contests and Competitions](#)
- [Museum Complex](#)
- [The Butter Cow](#)

Important Contacts

- **ISF Public Safety – NON-Emergency:** 515-262-3931
- **ISF Public Safety – Emergency:** 515-262-3111 x311
- **ISF Ice & Bottled Water:** 515-262-3111 x292 (Fairtime only)
- **Communications Department (Wi-Fi):** 515-401-1514 (Fairtime only)
- **Freeman Booth Products & Services:** 515-720-4390, kelsey.warfield@freeman.com
- **Julianna Curtis, Sponsorship Director:** 515-229-1479 (Fairtime cell), jcurtis@iowastatefair.org
- **Haley Van Zee, Sponsor Relations Intern:** 515-262-3111 x379, sponsorrelations@blueribbonfoundation.org