

Case Study: NASCAR

A RACE TO THE FINISH: ENSURING THE SAFETY OF LIVE RACING



Clean Harbors D3 Clean experts readied NASCAR equipment and facilities for the safe resumption of live competition attended by thousands of fans, all in an accelerated timeframe.

Background

The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) is an American auto racing sanctioning and operating company that is best known for stock car racing. The privately owned company was founded in 1948 by Bill France Sr. and his son, Jim France, who has been the CEO since 2018. The company is headquartered in Daytona Beach, Florida. Each year, NASCAR sanctions over 1,500 races at over 100 tracks in 48 US states as well as in Canada, Mexico and Europe.

Overview

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic put an abrupt end to the 2020 NASCAR season, as racetracks closed and teams and fans alike adhered to strict stay-at-home orders. In March 2020, NASCAR officials received permission to resume racing in select locations, without fans in attendance and with substantive safety protocols in place. Since NASCAR was the first commercial sporting venue to reopen, the risks were substantial, and with many unknowns.

“We truly were moving into the unknown,” John Bobo, Vice President, Racing Operations NASCAR. “No sporting series or venues had reopened, so we were the first set of tracks in a new snowfall. Hyper-sensitive is how I would describe the feeling of the planning/vetting and implementation processes. No mistakes could be afforded. By going first, you put a big target on your back as an industry, so all pitfalls had to be considered.”

“The unsung hero of NASCAR, our friends at Clean Harbors and Safety-Kleen who prepare our facilities before and after each day of on-track activity. Thank you for what you’ve allowed our sport to accomplish in 2020.”

–Van Knill, Senior Manager,
Partnership Marketing,
NASCAR



Approach

Clean Harbors began preparing proactively to help businesses reopen as soon as the country began to feel the effects of COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders were issued. “As soon as the epidemic hit our shores, we reached out to our contacts across all teams, series and tracks to let them know we had programs for decon and disinfection services,” said Buddy Judy, Clean Harbors Marketing Director. The Clean Harbors mitigation team was contacted early in 2020 due to a potential exposure at a final event before all sports and large gatherings were cancelled. They were asked to clean NASCAR’s fleet of trailers after they returned from Atlanta, where the series had been put on hold in mid-March due to the rising number of cases in the U.S. The project proved to be a valuable introduction: when plans to resume racing began, industry executives were already aware of Clean Harbors Covid-19 remediation capabilities and the company was among the first providers to be contacted by NASCAR executives.

Building on the strength of long-term client relationships.

While other vendors were considered, Clean Harbors had an edge that helped them win the assignment: subsidiary company Safety-Kleen has handled all of the organization’s environmental recycling and waste-disposal needs since the late 1980’s. It was the trust built over decades that put Clean Harbors in a position to get the business, especially if they acted quickly. “Our relationship with not only the series, NASCAR, but the two major track ownership groups, Speedway Motorsports Inc. and International Speedway Corporation, enabled us to react quickly and secure the business,” said Drew Patey, Safety-Kleen Motorsports Manager. In addition, Safety-Kleen has had a product/service sponsorship with all NASCAR track locations since the 1990’s; it was that long-term involvement with NASCAR that helped make them the logical choice for Covid-19 disinfection and decontamination services.

A “get it done” attitude and field expertise win the day.



Not surprisingly, there were a few unexpected twists and turns as NASCAR moved toward reopening, all of which the Clean Harbors team took in stride. “Once the state of South Carolina agreed to allow a race — we had already met with the track and assessed the property for our race week services — we headed for Darlington,” said

Brian Overmyer. Being the first race back, the Clean Harbors team was, if anything, over cautious, allowing more time than absolutely necessary and assigning more employees to each task than was needed.

As more and more tracks opened, Clean Harbors refined their approach to addressing an unprecedented public-health issue. Mitigation teams were deployed across the country, travelling to events in New Hampshire, Michigan, Las Vegas, Miami and other locations. According to NASCAR, it was the “get it done” attitude of Clean Harbors’ field service crews that represented the true values of the company — and invariably delivered the required results, regardless of location.



Deploying a team of knowledgeable motorsports specialists.

The Clean Harbors Motorsports team, led by Director Buddy Judy and Manager Drew Patey, partnered with NASCAR’s John Bobo, Vice President of Racing Operations at NASCAR; Elton Sawyer, Vice President, Officiating & Technical Inspections; and Tom Swindell, Manager of Events and Operations.

As NASCAR revealed their plans to resume racing, Clean Harbors worked closely with Mid-Atlantic Field Service Director, Brian Overmyer, a race fan with special knowledge of track, location, size, and other key details. Clean Harbors teams visited the tracks in person prior to each event, with stops that included Darlington, Charlotte, Bristol, Atlanta and Martinsville, where they walked the spaces accompanied by both track and Series representatives.

In-person site visits by the Clean Harbors team were followed by a series of emails, with checklists, maps and time schedules.



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1-844-DECON-19

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Results

Deep cleaning protocols established by Clean Harbors remain in place today — and will until it is clear that the threat of COVID-19 infection is no longer an issue. For the foreseeable future, at every event, the first step for NASCAR haulers is thorough sanitation by Clean Harbors crews, only after it's completed followed by unpacking from the last event.

The success of the Clean Harbors team led to key referrals for the company. By the second event in Charlotte, the track referred Clean Harbors to Fox Sports, where they replaced another vendor that was performing disinfection services at all events on the NASCAR calendar. NBC, SN and ESPN have also expressed an interest in Clean Harbors COVID-19 mitigation services. In most instances, that means daily disinfection every day the series is active at each track.



Clean Harbors' expert response to NASCAR's complex needs provided new clarity for their market niche. Initially, there had been some confusion about Safety-Kleen's affiliation with Clean Harbors, but customers quickly saw the advantages of having access to a larger company: more diverse service offerings, greater availability and a deep pool of knowledge and resources. Social media posts from tracks and the series, local TV in many markets, and word-of-mouth among NASCAR's sponsors all contributed to greater awareness of what the company could do — indisputable evidence that a job well done gets the attention it deserves.

About Clean Harbors D3

Only D3 Clean offers the proven processes, specialized equipment and skilled personnel to protect your business from the risks of COVID-19. We help schools, businesses and other organizations safely reopen their doors with a dedicated workforce of 1,200 mitigation experts, all trained in COVID-19-related remediation and mitigation safety. To learn more, go to www.cleanharbors.com/d3clean or call **1-844-DECON-19**.

A commitment to health and safety for every stakeholder.

From the very beginning, NASCAR's primary concern was the safety of their employees, participants, vendors and permitted fans.

Returning to racing at the cost of people's health was not, the association emphasized, an option. In other words, reopening tracks had to be accomplished in all of the right ways, and with the best experts they could find. And NASCAR had additional requirements: The selected vendor also had to get high marks for flexibility, cost, availability and accountability.

Only Clean Harbors measured up. Once the job was awarded, Drew and Buddy made sure that the lines of communication remained fluid and open, clarifying what was wanted, when and how often. To that end, Clean Harbors teams participated in multiple conference calls and developed a detailed checklist of tasks for field service teams to perform once they were on site. And equipment was key; essential on-site equipment included a variety of foggers, electrostatic sprayers, N-List chemicals, Tyvek suits, taped seams, full face respirators, disposable gloves and, perhaps the most important of all, no shortage of elbow grease.



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