



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
HARDWOOD
FEDERATION

FACILITY TOUR GUIDE

Introduction

Showcase Your Facilities and Build Relationships

A Guide to Successful Facility Tours for Elected Officials and Their Staff

Conducting facility visits for elected officials at any level of government, local, state, or federal, is a good way to build relationships for your company and increase support for a pro-growth, pro-business, pro-hardwood agenda. Likewise, they provide excellent opportunities for lawmakers to meet with their constituents, hear the success stories and the struggles that you face, and see firsthand how their policies work in real life. Facility tours educate lawmakers on the importance of the hardwood industry in the economy.

The definition of elected officials covers a wide variety of individuals, including those elected to local city councils or mayor's offices, those who represent your community in state legislatures and Governor's offices, and those who serve as members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate in Washington, D.C. It is important that people at every level of government understand why your business is important to your community. Policy, rules and legislation happen at every level and many of those elected at the local level will continue their careers at the state and federal level, bringing their experience and awareness with them as they move from one rung of the political ladder to the next.

Facility visits can also provide excellent press opportunities for your company. Better yet, elected officials will remember your role in your community and your hospitality. This guide will help you plan, prepare for, and conduct a successful facility tour and ensure that your experience is as effective as possible. You will find a simple yet thorough checklist to follow to ensure your facility tour runs as smoothly as possible. Facility tours paint the perfect picture of the hardwood industry at work.

The Hardwood Federation is here to help you with the process and if you have any questions or need assistance along the way please do not hesitate to ask. We have noted some places that this may be most relevant in the following guide. Please do not hesitate to contact us!!

Table of Contents

Checklist for Facility Tours	Page 4
Setting Up the Facility Tour	Page 5-6
Sample Invitation Letter	Page 7
Planning for the Media	Page 8
Sample Media Advisory	Page 9
Organizing the Plant Tour	Page 10-11
Preparing Displays/Literature	Page 12
Preparing for Arrival	Page 13
Conducting the Tour	Page 14
Following Up after the Tour	Page 15

Checklist for Facility Tours

Setting Up the Facility Tour

- Decide who to invite
- Send the invitation to elected officials and other guests (see pg. 5)
- Track and confirm RSVP's and follow up as necessary
- Coordinate length of event with the lawmaker's staff
- Inform your employees of the visit
- Determine the format of the event

Planning for the Media

- Clear media participation/attendance with congressional office
- Draft a media advisory, if desired (see pg. 7)
- Prepare area for news media to set up
- Be prepared to answer questions from the media

Organizing the Plant Tour

- Create an event agenda/plan
- Decide who will greet the legislator and participate in the tour
- Craft lawmaker introduction
- Establish a welcome/departure area for the legislator
- Allow the guest to address your staff either before or after the tour
- Create name badges for guest and staff
- Determine what equipment, areas, and operations the legislator will see during the visit
- Determine required safety equipment
- Hire/designate photographer, if desired
- Research lawmaker's background (the Hardwood Federation can provide information)
- Prepare talking points about your company story, company challenges, growth goals, and concerns with federal policies

Preparing Displays/Literature

- Determine product display, if applicable
- Display Hardwood Federation materials, if appropriate
- Provide list of attendees' names

Preparing for Arrival

- Designate a note taker
- Determine what machinery will be in operation, if applicable
- Provide directions to the plant
- Welcome guest on arrival

Conducting the Tour

- Provide safety equipment to tour guests, if applicable
- Show lawmaker how your production works
- Let your visitor be an active participant
- Mention any prepared talking points during the tour

Following Up After the Tour

- Send thank-you note to guest(s)
- Send photos to your guest
- Tell the Hardwood Federation about the tour
- Provide photos and press release to local media
- Continue to communicate with the lawmaker post-event

Setting up the Facility Tour

Decide who to invite

Is this a visit for Members of Congress, congressional staff, state or local officials? Consider starting with a local or state staff person and working up to elected officials and candidates. A staff-level visit can be just as important as a legislator visit and are often the first step to a visit from a Member of Congress or other lawmaker.

You may also want to invite other local business and government leaders or local business peers to join the tour.

Send the Invitation to Elected Officials and Other Guests

Call the local or regional staff office to invite your elected officials to visit your facility on their next visit to the district or state. You will most likely be asked to follow-up with a letter to the legislator and staff explaining who you are and what you would like to showcase. Include directions to the facility, as well as a requested amount of time. When inviting a legislator for a facility tour, be flexible and allow for several options. Once a date is set, be prepared for last-minute schedule changes. See page 7 for a sample invitation letter.

The ideal time to schedule a facility tour is during a recess period. They generally occur during the following holiday periods:

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (mid-January)
- Presidents Day (mid-February)
- Easter/Passover (March or April)
- Memorial Day (late May)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Summer (August through the week after Labor Day)
- Rosh Hashanah (late September or early October)
- Yom Kippur (10 days after Rosh Hashanah)
- Columbus Day (early October)
- Veterans Day (early November)
- Thanksgiving
- Late December through early January

Arrange the tour around the legislator's schedule. In addition to formal recesses, members of Congress and state legislatures are most likely to be in their home districts on Mondays and Fridays.

Track and Confirm RSVP's and Follow Up as Necessary

Call the official's scheduler to make sure that the invitation has been received. Make follow-up phone calls if the scheduler has not gotten back to you to confirm the lawmaker's visit. Don't be discouraged if a visit is not scheduled immediately. Be flexible and persistent. Invite him or her to drop by for a tour and cup of coffee the next time he or she passes through town. Leave the date open-ended, and the official may take you up on your invitation.

Coordinate Length of Event with the Lawmaker's Staff

Once the scheduler confirms the lawmaker is able to attend, work out a length of time for the facility tour. Determine how much time the lawmaker has for the visit. The tour itself should last approximately 30-60 minutes.

Setting up the Facility Tour (cont.)

Inform Your Employees of the Visit

Share the news with employees of the lawmaker's planned visit and encourage them to interact with the visitors as appropriate.

Format of the Event

The format of a facility tour should include the following:

- Greeting and welcoming the lawmaker, including a brief overview of your company
- A tour of key operations, equipment, and product(s)
- A closing meeting/wrap-up with refreshments. This is an opportunity for the elected official to address staff and take questions from both staff and media (if present)
- A photo opportunity for your company, the legislator, and the media

Sample Invitation Letter

The below letter is drafted for those elected to federal office. However, the same general language can be used for state and local elected officials. Always put the letter on your company stationery or use a logo in an e-mail. It is always advised that you check the mailing address on-line. The Hardwood Federation is also happy to assist you in tracking down the appropriate address. Invitations may be sent via surface mail, e-mail or fax.

The Honorable John/Jane Doe
United States House of Representatives/United States Senate
1234 House Office Building/Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515/20510

Dear Representative/Senator Doe:

I am writing to invite you to visit the [Facility Name] in [Facility Location]. As a member of the Hardwood Federation, we encourage every member of Congress to visit the facilities of their local hardwood industry. This will give you the opportunity to see what we do and understand how the hardwood industry helps our local, state, and national economies keep American companies operating and our citizens employed by meeting a growing consumer demand for hardwood products and maintaining an impressive record of hardwood forest stewardship.

[Insert information describing your company in two to three sentences. You may want to include history, a description of the operation, products and the number of employees.]

We expect the entire event to take no more than 60 minutes. Let me suggest the following dates:

[Insert Day, Month, Date – suggest a time frame]

[Insert Day, Month, Date – suggest a time frame]

[Insert Day, Month, Date – suggest a time frame]

We sincerely hope that you will accept our invitation to participate. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if one of these dates is convenient. If not, please feel free to suggest alternative dates or call or e-mail me directly at (PHONE) or (E-MAIL).

Thank you and I look forward to working with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Planning for the Media (optional)

Although it is not absolutely necessary, inviting media to attend your event can be attractive to lawmakers and helpful to raising your company's local profile. It also helps educate the community about issues that impact the local economy.

Clear the Media Participation/Attendance with the Lawmaker's Office

Once the lawmaker's office approves media attendance, contact your local media outlets, including daily newspapers, local weeklies, and area TV and radio stations. Offer to send your own report and photos to the paper.

Draft a Media Advisory, If Desired

Once the date is set, draft a media advisory containing the date, time, specific location, parking accommodations, and lighting requirements, if any (see page 9 for a sample media advisory). Note whether the tour itself is open for press coverage and if the legislator will take questions after the tour. Give the location. E-mail the draft to the legislator's local press officer for approval. When approved, fax or e-mail the advisory along with a press kit and company information to your local media contacts.

Prepare Areas for News Media to Set Up

Arrange for an area, inside or outside of your facility, for presentations and informal discussions with the news media. This area should be in front of your company's signage or logo.

Be Prepared to Answer Questions from the Media

The media may ask questions of company executives. Questions could be about your company or about key policy issues you have raised with elected officials at all levels. The Hardwood Federation can provide talking points and briefing materials regarding federal issues for you to use.

Sample Media Advisory

News Alert

[ALERT NUMBER]

NEWS CONTACT
[COMPANY CONTACT] (XXX) XXX-XXXX

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Advisory

[NAME OF COMPANY] FACILITY TO HOST [NAME OF LAWMAKER] ON [DATE]

What: [Name if company and City, State] will host [name of lawmaker] for a facility tour tomorrow morning as part of an effort to make legislators more aware of both the benefits manufacturing bring to communities and the unprecedented challenges now facing the U.S. hardwood industry.

The [Name of Lawmaker] will observe the facility's production of [give brief description of what the lawmaker will see while on the facility tour] and offer brief remarks to gathering employees.

Who: [NAME OF LAWMAKER]
[COMPANY NAME]

Where:[COMPANY NAME]
[FACILITY ADDRESS]
[CITY, ST, ZIP]

When: [DATE AND TIME]

Organizing the Facility Tour

Create an Event Agenda/Plan

Prepare a plan with the logistics of the facility tour.

Decide Who Will Greet the Legislator and Participate in the Tour

Don't be concerned with party affiliation. After all, your intent is to develop a good rapport with public officials who may influence the future of your company and your industry.

Craft Lawmaker Introduction

Decide who will provide remarks and the topics you want to cover in welcoming the elected official.

Establish a Welcome/Departure Area for the Legislator

Determine how you want the entrance to your facility to appear when your guest arrives and which room or area will be best for talking with your staff and media. Think about the type of signage you want to use and whether any displays will be set up here or somewhere else.

Allow the Guest to Address Your Staff either Before or After the Tour

Set up a podium and microphone (if necessary) and arrange seating (if necessary). Determine if refreshments will be served.

Create Name Badges for Guest and Staff

Name Badges are a must for your facility tour. Create name badges for your guest and any staff who accompanies him or her, as well as employees of your facility. Have extras on hand in case you need them.

Determine What Equipment, Areas, and Operations the Legislator Will See on the Visit

Use the agenda/plan you have developed to determine what you hope to cover during the facility tour, including processes, equipment, operations, and products.

Determine Required Safety Equipment

If your facility tour requires it, determine what safety equipment will be needed. These include construction helmets, goggles, gloves, earplugs, etc.

Hire/Designate a Photographer (if desired)

Have a photographer on hand to take pictures of your lawmaker's visit. These photos are excellent opportunities to publicize the event and for the lawmaker to remember the visit.

Research Lawmaker's Background

Research your guest's biographical, political, business, social, educational, and legislative background and voting record to identify areas of common interest. Find out what committees and subcommittees your lawmaker is on and try to match your legislative agenda with his or hers. The Hardwood Federation can provide information.

Organizing the Facility Tour (cont.)

Prepare Talking Points about Your Company Story, Company Challenges, Growth Goals, and/or Concerns with Federal Policies

Educate the legislator on the great things the hardwood industry does. Share your personal stories and examples of how government regulations and policies, as well as partisan politics and red tape, all impact the industry and your business and employees.

Preparing Displays/Literature

Determine Product Display, if applicable

Proudly display your products for your visitor to see. A special exhibit, promotional materials, and company literature will enhance the visit.

Display Hardwood Federation Materials, if appropriate

Displaying Hardwood Federation's policy materials, literature, etc. will serve as a reminder of the Federation's efforts in Washington.

Provide List of Attendees' Names

This is a great way to connect names and faces for the lawmaker as they remember their visit later.

Preparing for Arrival

Designate a Note Taker

Assign a team member to take notes on any discussions, if possible. This will be helpful for any follow-up you or the Hardwood Federation can do.

Determine What Machinery Will Be in Operation

This is important, especially if you plan to highlight or show a particular piece of machinery during the tour.

Provide Directions to the Facility

Ensure your guest knows what entrance to use; reserve a parking space for him or her.

Welcome Guest on Arrival

Greet officials at a designated area. In the event of rain, provide an umbrella if possible. Hand out name badges.

Conducting the Tour

Provide Safety Equipment to Tour Guests, if applicable

Provide your guest with any items necessary for a tour, such as construction helmet, safety goggles, gloves, ear plugs, etc.

Show Lawmaker How Your Production Line Works

Show your guest how your machinery works, the process involved, what new technologies are being used – or what classic hardwood manufacturing techniques you retain, and your workers' overall productivity.

Let Your Visitor Be an Active Participant

If feasible without shutting down production lines, offer your visitor the chance to address your entire workforce. Have them do something “physical”, such as shake hands, participate in a ribbon-cutting, run a machine, examine your product, or look at a computer screen during production. These are prime photo opportunities.

Mention Any Prepared Talking Points during the Tour

You have an important story to tell, so prepare specific answers to expected questions, particularly about your company's impact on your lawmaker's district/state. When developing your presentation, work in the following information:

Success Stories: Discuss how the facility has improved and contributed to the community. Inform visitors about your company's history, including total investment in facilities and equipment. Discuss the impact that legislation (both positive and negative) has on your company.

Products Manufactured: Describe how the products are used and where they are sold. Include the value of products you export if applicable. Describe your supply chain.

Jobs: Discuss the number of people employed in your facility/company and others around the state or country; labor unions represented in your plant; and worker health, safety, and training programs.

Payroll and Benefits: Discuss the wages and the types and value of employee benefits. Remind your visitor that each wage dollar multiplies in the wage earner's community in the form of rent, food purchases, clothing purchases, medical expenses, etc., before it goes to out-of-town suppliers.

Trade Facts: Do you export? If so, how has this helped your company stay in business or grow?

Community Impact: How much does your company pay in federal, state, and local taxes? What are your local expenditures to purchase supplies, materials, and services? DO you host town hall meetings? Does your company participate in community charities? Tell the legislator about your active role as a good corporate citizen.

Following Up After the Tour

A plant tour enhances the mutual understanding between you and your elected official. To make certain that he or she remembers your company, follow-up efforts are important.

Send Thank-you Note to Guest(s)

Write a thank-you note reiterating any key issues discussed during the tour. Invite the legislator to return at any time. Consider inviting your legislator to your company's annual picnic or other outing.

Send Photos to the Lawmaker's Office

Many times photos you send will appear in a constituent newsletter, and often they will wind up on the legislator's office wall or website.

Tell the Hardwood Federation about the Tour

To help the Hardwood Federation assist other companies, tell us how the tour went. Send us photos and press clippings which will also find their way into our publications.

Provide Photos and Press Release to Local Media

Provide the lawmaker's office with your company newsletter, if you have one, and other local publicity the visit generated. Provide local media with photos and a brief overview of the visit.

Continue to Communicate with the Lawmaker Post-event

Offer the member substantive policy advice. Track how your legislator votes on future legislation and express your thanks when he or she votes in favor of your positions.