

By Joan Arkins, Associate Publisher

FS/TEC

Long Beach, Calif.—Oct. 26-29

Wildfires racing across Southern California impacted everyone. The fires that had started just days earlier had killed more than a dozen people and burned over 500 square miles of land by the first day of the show. Thirteen fires in all would burn for two weeks. The Santa



Diane Estner of **SDD Systems** and Brian Garavuso of **Interstate Hotels & Resorts** are more interested in checking sports scores on their wireless devices than they are in enjoying Fright Night at the HFTP Annual Convention.

Ana winds that fanned the flames also blew ashes across the region. The cinders drifted across the grounds of the Long Beach Convention Center like an early season snowfall. Attendees and exhibitors alike were plagued by flight cancellations and delays relating to the fires. Exhibitors were diverted to alternate airports and many rented cars and drove hundreds of miles to be at FS/TEC. The problem was the attendees didn't do the same. Joe Mauro with inbox360 made it to the show, but his booth didn't. Shipping delays prevented his booth

from arriving until the second day of the show. Overall attendance at the show was so light that by the final day, exhibitors were eager to talk to anyone who wasn't another vendor.

Kiosks were the order of the day at FS/TEC; everywhere I looked a kiosk was shaking drink cups at me or enticing me to upgrade my combo. The kiosk even made an appearance at the airport in Los Angeles and now that I am home, kiosks are in my gas station's mini-mart tempting me to buy an extra large coffee for only 10 cents more.

IH/M&RS

New York, N.Y.—Nov. 8-11

Traffic was good at the IH/M&RS. The "Wireless and Beyond" and "Ask the Experts" sessions were two of the best I've attended in 2003. The wireless session took an overall look at everything from RFID to Bluetooth devices even 802.11a-z. The panelists, including a number of *Hospitality Upgrade* writers, did an excellent job explaining how wireless can touch nearly every aspect of a property's operations. The "Ask the Experts" panel was standing room only and nearly everyone stayed the entire time. Panelists answered questions in a free-for-all format and nothing was off limits. Audience members asked excellent questions and there were certainly many more, but unfortunately time ran out.

The icing on the cake came after the show, watching the lunar eclipse between New York City's skyscrapers. Even hurried New Yorkers stopped momentarily to look up at the sky.