

Guidelines for Dealing with Coronavirus COVID-19 on Construction Sites

What is the Coronavirus?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)-CoV-2 virus. The current mutation is a new strain of the SARS virus and no individual has any immunity prior to an exposure. The CDC has reported that testing has begun on a vaccine but for now, everyone should prepare and plan for possible impacts resulting from COVID-19. It has spread from China to many other countries around the world, including the United States.

As coronavirus has spread from China to Europe, the United States and around the globe, it has begun to have a debilitating impact on manufacturing, distribution, supply chains, and the workforce in general. It seems only a matter of time before COVID-19 directly affects U.S. construction projects.

First and most importantly, experts say the concern must be for construction site employee's health and well-being. The situation is fluid, but the good news is that the risk of transmission for those employed outside the healthcare sector is still low but is evolving, according to OSHA.

The construction industry must prepare for the effects of COVID-19 and mitigate the potential harm to workers and projects. Complete solutions are complex to develop in short order, but there are some simple initial steps that construction contractors and owners can take to assess their ability to deal with the potential impact of an outbreak on a construction project. The best approach is prevention.

Owners and contractors can and should work together to implement sanitation and infection control improvements on the jobsite. It could mean the difference between continuing operations and a shut-down of a project. The guidelines in this message do not address contract obligations or insurance coverages. These guidelines are in the interest of construction worker's safety, health and well-being.

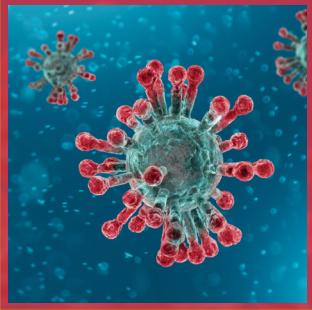
Closing a construction project on short notice should be treated as an organized integral part of the project. Each step should be as carefully planned and executed as any other portion of the project.

The closure of a project (interim or long term) will vary depending on the size and complexity of the project, but it should include, but not be limited to, these items:

- **Coordination and Communication** with General Contractors and Owners: plan and conduct risk assessments specific to each site.
- **Identify and Remove Known Threats:** Hazards, contaminated surfaces or areas.
- **Medical Care:** workers experiencing symptoms should be deferred offsite to seek professional diagnosis and medical attention.
- **Identify and Isolate** Infected Spaces, Tools, Areas, Surfaces: Determine whether those areas can be effectively disinfected and assist in risk assessments to determine the need to close the site down completely or partially for a period of time to allow focused screening.
- **Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment:** Health care specific PPE should be deployed while shutdown or evacuation processes occur (see below).
- **Establish Tool and Material Security** and safe logging in and out as well as cleaning of tools, materials, and equipment.
- **Documentation** of the conditions, response and implemented course of action (which could include complete or partial shutdown of projects for short or long term timeframes).
- **Continued Construction:** Determine the length of project shutdowns and continuance of construction options (through the construction management team).

It is important to maintain a stable approach to assessing and addressing these evolving situations. Attack the problem, not the people—protect the people. The efforts should focus on the virus. In the construction industry, long workdays and overtime at a jobsite are normal,





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but for infection control purposes there is increased risk for transmission of illness due to weakened immune systems. To make matters more challenging, construction-site sanitation is frequently less stringent than that in an office environment. It doesn't have to be, however, and for a little extra cost, better sanitation can be accomplished. It is recommended that portable washing stations be provided as needed and jobsite screenings of workers can be implemented as an interim step to minimize spread of disease.

Education and Training:

- Provide training for supervisors, employees and other key personnel to recognize signs and symptoms of COVID-19 as recommended by the CDC:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>
- Humanize the virus precautionary measures by asking supervisors to greet employees at the gate or jobsite entry point
- Schedule daily briefing or jobsite safety talks to communicate the news concerning the virus/project, etc. and to visually assess your crew
- During project safety talks, remind employees to keep 6 feet of personal space if possible
- Communicate a current fit-for-duty policy, including the requirement to provide a return-to-work authorization form if seen by a physician

Personal Protective Equipment:

- Personal protective equipment should be assigned to an individual, not shared among groups.
- Companies should consider implementing a 100% glove use policy.
- Individuals should wear disposable gloves while wiping down all tools before storing or at the end of every shift.

IMPORTANT: *The guidelines in this message do not address contract obligations or insurance coverages. These basic guidelines are in the interest of construction worker's safety, health and well-being.*



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