

MEMBER UPDATE

TAB Information and Response to COVID-19

Dear TAB Members:

This week we have experienced unprecedented disruptions to our everyday lives, families and businesses in our local communities, across the state and nationally, as we respond and adjust to the threat of Coronavirus/COVID-19. Like all of you, the staff and leadership have had to adjust the operations of our Association to allow us to continue to serve you, our members, during this national crisis. Rest assured that TAB is fully operational, as our staff continues to work on your behalf. We will continue to work regular business hours, whether that be at the TAB office or remotely, as the situation develops.

With our number one priority being the health and safety of our families, employees and industry partners, TAB has posted extensive Coronavirus/COVID-19 resources on our website that we will continue to update. Information is available in English and Spanish and we urge you to share with all individuals and companies that you work with. You may access the information here: <https://www.texasbuilders.org/about-us/coronavirus-covid-19.html>

We have also been in continual contact with the Governor and his staff this week to stress the importance of keeping the residential construction industry operating to the best of our ability during this pandemic, while doing so in a safe manner for the public, our employees, subcontractors and other industry partners. We are working with our 27 local home builder associations and NAHB to make sure that local, state and national decision-makers know that our industry is committed to working with their jurisdictions to ensure safe job sites that follow CDC and OSHA guidelines. I can't stress how important it is that we do our part.

The feedback from the Governor and local officials is clear: we must do everything we can to conform to the social distancing guidelines and limit our work sites and other locations to 10 individuals or less at any one time. For the most part, these efforts have been successful to date, as both elected officials, state and local government employees and our industry work through our new reality to keep building permitting, inspections, county document filings and other crucial governmental functions operational. The common feedback we are receiving continues to be that keeping the construction economy working can continue if done in a safe manner that limits the spread of the virus.

In line with this week's discussions, here is a letter we sent to the Governor yesterday, along with our fellow state-wide commercial construction associations, delivering the message about the essential nature of our industry during these challenging times.



March 19, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
State Capitol
P.O. Box 2428
Austin, TX 78711

RE: Texas Construction Industry and COVID-19

Dear Governor Abbott:

Thank you for your efforts during this current public health crisis. We recognize and sincerely appreciate your leadership and the work of your staff and those who are spending every hour to keep Texans safe during this time. You have always understood the importance of construction to the state's economy and we hope you will recognize the need to continue in a safe manner that follows best practices and implements the OSHA guidelines.

Members of the Texas construction industry are committed to the health, safety and welfare of our workforce and the public. The undersigned organizations represent many of the general contractors, specialty contractors and suppliers that employ the more than 795,000 Texans who work in the construction industry. We write to you today to ask you to treat construction as an essential service for the state and refrain from any action to curtail ongoing construction projects. As higher risk industries are being impacted by the spread of COVID-19, it is more important to the long-term health of Texas' economy to keep the construction industry intact.

Based on input from the CDC, OSHA has developed a hierarchy of industry risk for COVID-19. The lowest risk industries are those with workers that have "minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers." Construction jobsites are not densely populated work areas. Construction sites are a unique workplace with their own levels of "social distancing" built in. Many workers are segregated completely or separated by large distances. Access to jobsites is strictly controlled with the public kept out. Additionally, safety briefings are already part of the

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construction industry culture, and with the additional guidelines developed by OSHA to address COVID-19, briefings include the extra precautions recommended by the CDC and OSHA.

The impact of shutting down construction work in Texas will severely impact the construction of critical infrastructure and housing. Worker layoffs will make it extremely difficult for construction companies to meet the demand to maintain existing healthcare facilities and build new ones, retrofit existing buildings for emergency use and provide new transportation corridors for people and materials. Moreover, such a hit to the construction industry workforce in Texas will undermine current and future efforts of recovery due to natural disasters. A virus pandemic does not halt hurricanes, tornadoses or floods.

Our associations have encouraged all of our members to implement strict measures for the safety of their workers and the public during this pandemic. We've distributed OSHA 3996-03 guidance on preparing the workplace in light of COVID-19 and encouraged worker education. With the low risk nature of construction related to the virus and the existing heavy emphasis on safety in our industry to implement protections for workers and the public, we urge you to recognize construction as essential services that should be continued during this time.

Sincerely,

Will McAdams, President
Associated Builders & Contractors of Texas

Jennifer Woodard, Executive Vice President
AGC of Texas - Highway, Heavy, Utilities & Industrial Branch

Corbin Van Arsdale, President
AGC of Texas - Building Branch

Scott Norman, Executive Director
Texas Association of Builders

Raymond Risk, President
Texas Construction Association

Yesterday, the Governor issued additional Executive Orders that take effect tonight to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Texas. You will note that these orders do NOT shut down our industry, nor many other industries in this state, but the limitations on gatherings greater than 10 are emphasized and will likely start being enforced at the local level. In order for our industry to continue to operate, we must work to comply with all guidance from local, state and national officials.

- *Order No. 1: In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, every person in Texas shall avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10 people.*
- *Order No. 2: In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, people shall avoid eating or drinking at bars, restaurants, and food courts, or visiting gyms or massage parlors; provided, however, that the use of drive-thru, pickup, or delivery options is allowed and highly encouraged throughout the limited duration of this executive order.*
- *Order No. 3: In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, people shall not visit nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance.*
- *Order No. 4: In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, schools shall temporarily close.*

These orders will be effective on a statewide basis starting at 11:59 PM on March 20, 2020 and will end at 11:59 PM on April 3, 2020, subject to extension thereafter based on the status of COVID-19 in Texas and the recommendations of the CDC.

We will continue to communicate with our fellow industry associations and leaders in the banking, real estate, mortgage lending, construction materials supply, land title and other partners to address various financial, supply chain and real estate transaction issues, as they arise. We will disseminate new information from these discussions to you as soon as possible.

Finally and with all urgency, the Governor, the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Texas Hospital Association have requested from TAB and the entire Texas construction industry that all surplus N95 masks that our member companies or their subcontractors have, be donated to local hospitals in your community. We urge you to donate your inventory of N95 masks and will forward additional information about this important endeavor as it is available.

As this situation continues to evolve across our state and nation, please do not hesitate to contact us at TAB if there are situations in your community or businesses of which we should be aware. We will do our best to assist or point you in the right direction.

Stay safe. Together we will work through this and continue to build a better Texas.

Sincerely,



Scott Norman
Executive Director
Texas Association of Builders



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