



23 March 2020

The Honorable Henry McMaster
Governor, State of South Carolina
South Carolina Office of the Governor
1100 Gervais St.
Columbia, SC 29201

RE: South Carolina Construction Industry and COVID-19

Dear Governor McMaster,

Thank you for your continued leadership and the work and contributions of your staff and those who are striving to keep our friends and neighbors of South Carolina safe during this time during this current public health crisis. Our organization represents hundreds of general contractors, specialty contractors, suppliers and service firms who make up an industry sector employment of more than 450,000 residents of South Carolina. We write to you today on behalf of the construction industry which is so important to the people of South Carolina and ask that you treat construction as an essential service for South Carolina and refrain from any action to curtail ongoing construction projects.

The construction industry and related support infrastructure play an important part in the ongoing delivery and upkeep of safe, healthy facilities and infrastructure throughout South Carolina. We are the primary resource which delivers and maintains the essential and critical infrastructure that must remain in operation throughout this crisis. We proudly build and maintain facilities & infrastructure that supports healthcare, emergency services, critical manufacturing, food & agricultural processing, manufacturing/distribution/logistics of important sustaining products, water/wastewater, the energy grid, basic housing and our local & national defense.

An important aspect to consider is construction interruptions and site abandonment will result in undue exposure to weather conditions leading to future building environmental issues and resulting air quality dangers within these facilities. In the event of emergency facility needs or natural disasters, the construction industry responds! Our industry must be in place and operationally sound to be effective. Unfortunately, a virus pandemic does not halt hurricanes, floods, tornados or other emergencies.

Management within our industry is utilizing work-from-home options and will continue to do so. We strongly believe that construction operations must be designated essential service in order to deliver these projects in a safe manner that follows best practices and implements the CDC and OSHA guidelines. Our industry members possess a serious and strong commitment to the health, safety and welfare of our workforce and the public.

OSHA has developed a hierarchy of industry risk for COVID-19 and the low-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 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 training & regular briefings are already a strength of the construction industry culture and we are continually reinforcing CDC and OSHA 3990-03 guidelines throughout this crisis.

We have actively implemented enhanced jobsite procedures which meet or exceed CDC and OSHA standards and have implemented regular reinforcement briefings over the past weeks which now include these additional recommended precautionary standards. The construction industry's health and safety communication, inspection and enforcement protocols are already solidly in place to manage health & safety risk factors unique to our industry.

Finally, the construction trade workforce is finally back intact after approximately a decade of effort to recruit and train talent back to our industry after construction was disproportionately impacted during the last recession. Shuttering construction could severely damage our industry workforce and once again create issues with respect to the legitimacy of our various trades as the proper hands-on career choice for many of our residents.

With the high level of importance of construction within our state, the low risk nature of construction related to the virus and a long-standing heavy emphasis and professional experience implementing health and safety protections for workers and the public, we urge you to recognize construction as essential services that should be continued during this time.

Sincerely,

**Associated Builders & Contractors of the Carolinas
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