

March 17, 2020

Tuscola Chamber & Economic Development has been monitoring the flow of information between local public health officials and the business community regarding COVID-19. We sit on the Douglas County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) and have been working to coordinate planning with the City of Tuscola and Douglas County EMA. We want to share some key information with local businesses.

This is certainly a trying time in our region, state and nation. We know that the situation can be scary and frustrating for the ordinary citizen. Those of you who own or manage a business have the added worry of less customers, a smaller workforce, disruption in deliveries, and a host of other issues. We cannot solve all of those issues, but we do hope to provide you with the most timely information possible and also ask you to share your situation with us.

Our organization cannot do this work alone and will be working with area chambers of commerce, local economic development groups and other similar groups to deliver you this information. Consequently, you may get these emails more than once. Our apologies in advance for clogging your inbox, but over-communicating is preferable to under-communicating.

This first message will be a bit longer than normal because there is a lot of information to share:

1. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has put together a great and comprehensive guide to COVID-19 geared directly at businesses and employers. You can find the guide <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html> The CDC gives some excellent guidance on how to treat your employees in this difficult time. Like you, they are victims of this circumstance too. We will all need to demonstrate compassion, flexibility and creativity to pull through this. The US Chamber of Commerce also has a great resource website (open to all) that can be found <https://www.uschamber.com/coronavirus>
2. The Small Business Administration (SBA) has received authorization to provide small business assistance through the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. This program can provide low interest loans of up to \$2M to businesses and private non-profits. More information can be found <https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources>
3. It's important to recognize that the state has not yet received a disaster declaration, so the EIDL program is not yet available to Illinois businesses and non-profits.
4. The State of Illinois is working to submit its disaster declaration to the federal government. This will unlock programs like the SBA loan program above and others.
But they need your help to document the impact of COVID-19 on business

operations. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) have created a web portal that will allow you to share information they can compile into their request. You can complete the form by going to <https://form.jotform.com/200717156003039>.

5. Late Friday night the US House of Representatives passed a relief bill in response to COVID-19. It is expected to pass the Senate this week and be signed by the President. Details on programs will be emerging in the coming days and weeks -- and we will share them with you -- but in the meantime the US Chamber of Commerce has a nice summary <https://www.uschamber.com/sites/default/files/US-Chamber-Coronavirus-Supplemental-Summary.pdf>.
6. Governor Pritzker ordered all bars and restaurants to close as of 9 p.m. last night. The Illinois Restaurant Association has been compiling resources and information [here](https://www.illinoisrestaurants.org/news/491097/Updated-Restaurant-Resources-for-Addressing-Coronavirus.htm). <https://www.illinoisrestaurants.org/news/491097/Updated-Restaurant-Resources-for-Addressing-Coronavirus.htm> Their resources include a good presentation on preparing for and dealing with COVID-19 which can be found <https://files.constantcontact.com/58ea69d3101/7f76c2cb-5cc1-41f2-9805-522da2dbd30f.pdf> The state will be publishing more guidelines on this matter. The Douglas County Health Dept. has been in contact with all establish
7. We have received a number of questions regarding unemployment insurance and filing for employees impacted by COVID-related shutdowns. There is still not a lot of specific information available, but we will keep looking. You can access some information from the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) <https://www2.illinois.gov/ides/Pages/COVID-19-and-Unemployment-Benefits.aspx>. (Warning: high traffic has caused their website to crash. You may have to try multiple times.) National Law Review does have a good summary of the House bill that was passed early Saturday morning <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/emergency-coronavirus-bill-what-employers-need-to-know-regarding-legislative> Note that the bill still needs to be passed by the Senate and signed by the President, both of which are expected this week.
8. The Illinois Gaming Board has ordered the suspension of all video gaming operations at licensed operations as of 9 pm Monday, March 16. More <https://www.iml.org/file.cfm?key=18334>

We are grateful to our colleagues at the Greater Peoria County EDC, Champaign County EDC, EDC of Macon County and the Bloomington-Normal EDC who have been sharing resources as they were assembling information for their own communities. We are thankful for their assistance and partnership. We have a rich network of resources here in Central Illinois.

Champaign County EDC and Greater Peoria County EDC each have websites which can be found at: www.cusbdc.org/covid-19-business-information-resources/ and www.gpcovid.com to assemble and organize this information. We will be adding this information to the www.tuscola.org website as well today. Please check back frequently as they will continue to add resources.

Finally, if you have a question, want to share information about your company's situation, or are in need of resources, we have set up a special email address: tedi@tuscola.org. We will do our best to address your issues as they arise.

Thank you for all you do for your community and our region. Together, we will get through this.

Tuscola Chamber & Economic Development - Brian Moody, Executive Director