



COVID-19 Energy Sector Response Efforts and Frequently Asked Questions

This document is the product of collaborative efforts to gather current information. We appreciate everyone's patience during this dynamic event and encourage everyone to share information. Send any updates, concerns or questions to energyresponsecenter@hq.doe.gov. These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will be updated regularly as new information becomes available.

CURRENT STATUS OF DOE RESPONSE EFFORTS

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response (CESER) has been closely monitoring the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) since January 31. Within CESER, the Emergency Support Function #12 (ESF#12) Energy Response Organization (ERO) is part of the federal mitigation and response to COVID-19. CESER and the ERO are holding regular calls with state and industry partners, to discuss preparations, provide awareness, and assess issues that may require federal support, including long-term concerns due to supply chain disruptions. Coordination and associated tasks and Requests for Information (RFIs) from the federal, state, and energy sector will continue into the near future.

The U.S. Department of Energy's ESF#12 team is activated at a Level III and ESF#12 Regional Coordinators have been virtually supporting activations in the National Response Coordination Center and FEMA Regions V, IX, and X. In the other regions, the DOE Regional Coordinators are monitoring and staying in regular contact with states in their designated regions to identify needs.

CESER advises energy sector partners to remain vigilant to cybersecurity threats. Energy sector partners are encouraged to work with the Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center (E-ISAC), the Downstream Natural Gas ISAC (DNG-ISAC), and the Oil and Natural Gas ISAC (ONG-ISAC) to remain vigilant to cybersecurity threats, including COVID-19 themed phishing emails, and to ensure that the latest cybersecurity guidance is provided to their organizations.

CESER also urges energy sector companies to assess the full breadth of risk within the supply chain, including that of managed and industry service providers to evaluate how COVID-19 may affect service and their contractors approach to service delivery.

COVID-19 RESOURCES

Government Web Links:

- DOE: [Coronavirus Hub](#)
- CDC: [COVID-19 Situation Summary](#)
- Global Status: [World Health Organization, Coronavirus](#)
- DHS CISA Insights: [Risk Management for Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- DHS CISA: [COVID-19 Homepage](#)
- DHS CISA: [Memorandum and Guidance on Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce](#)
- FEMA: [National Business EOC Operations Dashboard](#)
- FEMA: [Coronavirus Rumor Control](#)





Energy Sector Links:

- American Public Power Association: [Coronavirus page](#)
- American Gas Association: [Coronavirus page](#)
- American Petroleum Institute: [Pandemic Resources page](#)
- American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers: [COVID-19 page](#)
- American Public Gas Association: [Coronavirus Resources page](#)
- Edison Electric Institute: [Pandemic page](#)
- Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC): [COVID-19 Resources](#)
- International Association of Drilling Contractors: [COVID-19 Update page](#)
- International Liquid Terminals Association: [Pandemic Resources page](#)
- Interstate Natural Gas Association of America: [COVID-19 Response page](#)
- National Rural Electric Cooperatives: [COVID-19 page](#)
- Petroleum Marketers Association of America: [Coronavirus Resources page](#)
- Offshore Operators Committee: [COVID-19 Mitigations page](#)

State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Web Links:

- National Governors Association (NGA) [State Coronavirus Actions](#)
- National Conference of State Legislations (NCSL) [State Legislator COVID-19 Resources](#)
- National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO) [Support for State Energy Offices](#)
- National Association of State Regulators (NARUC) [COVID News and Resources](#)
- National Association of Counties (NaCo) [County and State Emergency Declaration Map](#)

WHAT GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE FOR ENERGY SECTOR PERSONNEL & SOCIAL DISTANCING?

Protective measures for access to homes and businesses in restricted areas should follow CDC and OSHA guidance:

- CDC [Pandemic Influenza Resources](#)
- CDC [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) [COVID-19 Worker Safety](#)

Non-essential work orders at customer homes or businesses that require workers to enter may be deferred or postponed when possible to preserve Personnel Protection Equipment (PPE) for essential emergency work and to protect the health and safety of personnel.

ARE ENERGY PERSONNEL AND SERVICES CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL?

CESER worked with industry and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to put together a list of essential critical infrastructure workers, which included electricity (across all sources), petroleum, natural gas and propane workers. **The DHS [website](#) was updated on March 28, 2020 to include the current guidance on essential workers.**



The National Governor's Association (NGA) sent a memorandum to Governors and their Energy Advisors on March 25, 2020, highlighting three areas where Governors can support the energy sector during the pandemic response. **The full guidance for the three areas can be found [here](#).**

The three items identified are:

- 1) Ensure critical energy infrastructure employees can be identified and credentialed in the event of a shelter in place order
- 2) Critical infrastructure workers may need priority access to testing, PPE, and cleaning supplies
- 3) Waivers for fuel carrier standards and commercial driver's licenses may be needed to move critical utility supplies

The Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council has also released guidance on mission essential staff that can be found [here](#).

HOW CAN ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL GAIN ACCESS TO RESTRICTED AREAS?

In cases where access is restricted, the State Emergency Operating Centers (SEOCs) have defined protocols for allowing access for essential personnel. County Public Health Departments are also involved and will have representatives at the SEOC for coordinating purposes. DOE ESF#12 Regional Coordinators are supporting SEOCs virtually and can assist if needed. Send an e-mail to energyresponsecenter@hq.doe.gov if you need to contact your DOE Regional Coordinator.

HOW CAN MY COMPANY ACQUIRE PPE & TESTING FOR ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL?

Energy sector companies are monitoring the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) for essential workers. Currently the first priority is to ensure PPE is available to healthcare workers and for first responders. **CESER is coordinating with the DHS Emergency Support Function #14 and the [FEMA Supply Chain Stabilization Task Force](#) to identify a path forward to address the energy sectors PPE needs once the Public Health PPE supply chain begins to stabilize. In addition to this effort the FEMA National Resource Prioritization Cell at the NRCC recently stood up to support supply chain efforts regarding distribution of PPE to healthcare workers and first responders. CESER and the ESF#12 team will continue to highlight the PPE needs for energy critical infrastructure personnel.**

In the jurisdictions in which they operate, energy sector companies can connect with local or state energy officials or emergency operations centers to engage in a discussion about the prioritization of any future needs for PPE, testing, or other unmet needs. CDC has issued [guidance](#) for who should be tested, but decisions about testing are at the discretion of state and local health departments and/or individual clinicians. **CESER is working with multiple FEMA task forces and federal, industry and state partners to identify new testing options and best practices as they become available.**



WHAT DOES “SHELTER IN PLACE” AND AREA RESTRICTIONS MEAN & HOW WILL THESE ORDERS AFFECT CRITICAL ENERGY SERVICES?

Some Governors and local government leaders have instituted “Stay at Home” or “Shelter in Place” orders to limit the spread of COVID-19. The orders vary, but generally include provisions to allow essential services to remain open and for essential workers to continue working. Links to these types of orders can be found on the NGA [website](#).

Federal authority is generally limited to preventing the spread of COVID-19 from foreign countries into the United States and through interstate commerce. The FEMA Coronavirus Rumor web page has confirmed that there is no national lock-down or quarantine in place.

WILL DOMESTIC TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AFFECT ACCESS?

Domestic travel advisories are not expected to affect critical services or travel for energy sector employees. **The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued domestic travel advisories for [New York City](#), [New York](#), [New Jersey](#) and [Connecticut](#) due to extensive community transmission of COVID -19 in these areas. The advisories do not apply to employees for critical infrastructure as defined by the Department of Homeland Security essential staff guidance, which includes energy sector services and personnel supporting essential energy services.**

WHAT IS THE CURRENT ROLE OF THE NATIONAL GUARD?

The President issued a [Memorandum](#), ordering National Guard troops in California, **Florida, Guam, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey**, New York, **Puerto Rico** and Washington to operate under [Title 32 status](#). This allows the National Guard to be managed by state Governors, but be funded by FEMA and DHS. Additional detail on National Guard activities in states can be found on the [COVID-19 Response](#) website and the FEMA [website](#).

As of **March 31, 2020**, **forty-seven** states/territories have activated their State National Guard. Over **16,100** Air and Army National Guard are now supporting the COVID-19 response at the direction of their Governors. Current National Guard COVID-19 response missions include, but are not limited to:

- Working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to increase medical capacity
- Supporting warehouse operations and logistics efforts to help deliver critical supplies
- Delivering food in hard-hit communities
- Providing critical PPE training and delivery to first responders and hospital personnel
- Supporting local emergency management agencies with response planning and execution
- Providing support and symptoms screening to testing facilities
- Serving as response liaisons and support to State Emergency Operations Centers
- Providing transportation and assessment support to healthcare providers
- Assisting with disinfecting/cleaning of common public spaces





WHAT ARE THE CANADIAN U.S. BORDER TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS?

The United States and Canada are temporarily restricting all non-essential travel across the U.S./Canada border. The restriction allows travel for essential workers and deliveries for supply chains to ensure that food, fuel, and life-saving medicines are maintained. DOE ESF#12 responders are available to work with the FEMA National Response Coordination Center and DHS to coordinate any issues or concerns for critical energy infrastructure located near the U.S./Canada border to allow travel across the border to support critical work. The updated travel restrictions can be found on the following [website](#).

WHAT GUIDANCE HAS BEEN ISSUED TO INDUSTRY TO ENSURE ENERGY RELIABILITY AMID POTENTIAL CORONAVIRUS IMPACTS?

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), in consultation with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), as well as the DOT Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration (PHMSA) has issued guidance to provide additional flexibility to operators and staff to help ensure continued operations. Operators for transportation including hazardous liquid and gas pipeline, underground natural gas storage, liquefied natural gas, and bulk electric systems are focusing their resources on keeping people safe and providing critical services during this unprecedented public health emergency. Additional guidance: [PHMSA Stay of Enforcement, Guidance for State Partners](#) and the NERC and FERC [Industry Guidance to Ensure Grid Reliability](#).

CAN THE USE OF WINTER BLEND FUEL CONTINUE BEYOND THE MAY 1 SWITCH TO SUMMER BLEND?

To minimize or prevent the disruption of an adequate supply of gasoline throughout the United States, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a nationwide fuel waiver that waives certain federal fuel standards under the Clean Air Act. This waiver applies to the following regulations:

- **Federal Gasoline Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) Standards** require the sale of low-volatility summer gasoline by refiners, importers, distributors, resellers, terminal owners and operators, and carriers beginning May 1. Without a waiver of the summer gasoline requirements, regulated parties would be required to stop selling high-volatility winter gasoline in their storage tanks on May 1. The waiver does not permit refiners to produce gasoline after May 1 that exceeds the summer gasoline standard and does not permit any party to blend butane to cause the gasoline to exceed the summer gasoline standard. Regulated parties must continue to comply with applicable state or local requirements, or restrictions related to RVP, unless waived by the appropriate authorities.
- **Federal Reformulated Gasoline (RFG) Requirements** in all RFG covered areas that apply to terminal owners, terminal operators, distributors, carriers, retailers, and wholesale purchaser-consumers. Additionally, EPA is waiving provisions that prohibit combining any RFG blendstock for oxygenate blending with any other gasoline, blendstock, or oxygenate, unless certain conditions are met.

In addition, several states have issued **waivers that apply to state-level RVP requirements that typically begin April 1.**



The EPA has also issued a [Memorandum](#) that allows discretion for COVID-19 implications for EPA's enforcement and compliance assurance programs. For more information on waivers, visit the DOE [Energy Waiver Library](#).

HOW CAN MY COMPANY ENSURE TIMELY AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORT OF GOODS AND SERVICES? IS THERE AN HOURS-OF-SERVICE WAIVER?

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Emergency Declaration

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) issued a Federal Motor Carrier Administration Declaration and [Expanded Emergency Declaration](#) that provides regulatory relief for commercial motor vehicle operations that are providing direct assistance in support of emergency relief efforts related to COVID-19. The declaration shall remain in effect until the termination of the emergency or until 11:59 P.M. (ET) on April 12, 2020, whichever occurs sooner.

FMCSA Declaration Information

- FMCSA [FAQ part 1](#) and [FAQ part 2](#) related to the Emergency Declaration
- FMCSA [Commercial Driver's License Waiver 3/24/20](#)

Emergency Declarations Waivers, Exemptions and Permits

- FMCSA [Emergency Declarations, Waivers, Exemptions and Permits](#) homepage
- FMCSA list of [State Emergency Declarations](#)
- **FMCSA** [3-month Waiver for States and Commercial Learner's Permit \(CLP\) Holders](#)

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON PORT ACCESS?

The Coast Guard has issued multiple Marine Safety Information Bulletins (MSIB) on the Novel Coronavirus. To view the most recent MSIB regarding COVID-19, refer to the Coast Guard [MSIB Publications](#). The Coast Guard recommends that people review the CDC [travel guidance](#) and the U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisories](#) related to COVID-19.

