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. 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) continues to support the federal mitigation and response to COVID-19. CESER and the ERO continue to coordinate with federal, state, and energy sector partners to discuss preparations, provide awareness, and assess issues that may require federal support, including long-term concerns due to supply chain disruptions.

The U.S. Department of Energy's ESF#12 team is activated and ESF#12 Regional Coordinators have been virtually supporting activations in the National Response Coordination Center and FEMA Regions V, and IX. 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. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released guidance on defending against video-teleconferencing hijacking.

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
- World Health Organization: Coronavirus homepage
- DHS CISA: COVID-19 Homepage and Risk Management for COVID-19
- DHS CISA: Guidance on Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce
- FEMA: National Business EOC Operations Dashboard
- FEMA: Coronavirus Rumor Control
- TSA: COVID-19 Enrollment Questions

Energy Sector Links:

- American Public Power Association (APPA): [Coronavirus page](#)
- American Gas Association (AGA): [Coronavirus page](#)
- American Petroleum Institute (API): [Pandemic Resources page](#)
- American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPM): [COVID-19 page](#)
- American Public Gas Association (APGA): [Coronavirus Resources page](#)
- Edison Electric Institute (EEI): [Pandemic page](#)
- Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) [COVID-19 Page](#)
- Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC): [COVID-19 Resources](#)
- International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC): [COVID-19 Update page](#)
- International Liquid Terminals Association (ILTA): [Pandemic Resources page](#)
- Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA): [COVID-19 Response page](#)
- National Rural Electric Cooperatives (NRECA): [COVID-19 page](#)
- Petroleum Marketers Association of America (PMAA): [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 Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance:

- CDC [Pandemic Influenza Resources](#)
- CDC [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- OSHA [COVID-19 Worker Safety](#); [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

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 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

U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette issued letters to Governors requesting assistance to ensure critical infrastructure remains operational.

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 FOR ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL?

At Secretary Brouillette's direction, the Department of Energy conducted a thorough review of inventories of PPE and other supplies across the DOE enterprise (including our labs, plants and sites across the nation) to assist with the President's response to COVID-19. The Department, working with FEMA, will make its excess PPE available for the national COVID-19 response, so they may get supplies to the communities in need as quickly as possible.

DOE continues to support the safety and security of the energy sector workforce who maintain the surety of our energy system 24/7. Providing for this vital strategic asset helps maintain the American way of life and underpins the strength of our national security.

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 first responders.

In the jurisdictions in which they operate, energy sector companies can connect with local or state energy officials and emergency operations centers to identify prioritization of any future needs for PPE.

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR OPTIMIZING PPE?

Organizations are encouraged to review existing health and safety plans and procedures for opportunities to reduce, reuse, or repurpose PPE. The CDC issued a [PPE optimization strategy](#) for use when PPE supplies are stressed, running low, or absent.

FEMA issued a [PPE preservation best practices](#) fact sheet with the following items:
1. Reduce Usage Rate of PPE by Modifying Normal Operations and Procedures
2. Reuse PPE by Implementing Optimization, Decontamination, and Reuse Procedures
3. Repurpose Alternative Types or Sources of PPE
   a. Use alternative NIOSH-approved respirators in lieu of N-95 FFR for activities for which respiratory protection is required per CDC [direction](#).

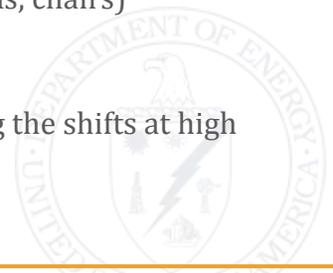## HOW CAN MY COMPANY ACQUIRE TESTING FOR ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL?

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. The CDC posted a prioritized testing [brochure](#) that identifies energy essential critical industry personnel with symptoms as Priority 3.

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. Energy industry suppliers and infrastructure operators are identifying "essential" and "mission essential" employees for prioritized COVID-19 testing. More information regarding prioritized testing requests can be found in this [industry letter](#) to national organizations representing state and local government leaders. The Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council also updated [Testing and Protecting Mission Essential Control Center and Generation Facility Personnel](#).

WHAT ARE SOME MEASURES INDUSTRY IS USING FOR SEQUESTRATION OF ESSENTIAL CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE WORKERS?

Some energy companies are implementing sequestration protocols for mission essential personnel to ensure the uninterrupted operations of energy functions, including:

- Conducting workforce analysis to determine the minimum number of mission essential workers needed to ensure uninterrupted operations
- Asking for sequestration volunteers with needed skills and setting expectations about duration
- Organizing "units" or "crews" with appropriate skillsets that will share the same shift, but not be exposed to other personnel
- Creating a total separation of living, sleeping, cooking, laundry, and rest/entertainment areas for the individual work crews
- Creating greater physical separation between workstations when possible
- Providing individually assigned peripheral equipment (e.g., mice, keyboards, chairs)
- Testing workers for COVID-19 prior to being sequestered
- Requiring all employees to wear appropriate PPE while working
- Thoroughly sanitizing work areas at each shift change and regularly during the shifts at high touch points

- Implementing pre-site entry wellness questionnaires and temperature checks throughout the shift
- Requiring workers conducting wellness checks to use social distancing and wear PPE

HOW ARE WELLNESS CHECKS BEING IMPLEMENTED IN THE SECTOR?

Based on the CDC guidance to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and the OSHA guidance to prevent exposure in the workplace many organizations are implementing wellness checks throughout the work shifts of essential workers. The wellness checks may include questions on how the workers are feeling and a temperature check to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19. The medical or non-medical professionals conducting the wellness checks should have instructions on how to proceed and who to notify if symptoms of COVID-19 are detected.

The CDC issued guidance for critical infrastructure workers who may have had COVID-19 exposure. Workers who were exposed but remain asymptomatic should adhere to the following practices prior to and during their work shift:

- Pre-Screen: The employee's temperature and symptoms should be checked prior to them starting work and ideally before entering a facility.
- Regular Monitoring: As long as the employee does not have a temperature or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer.
- Wear a Mask: The employee should wear a facemask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure.
- Social Distance: The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit.
- Disinfect and Clean workspaces: Clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.

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 Control 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](#), offering National Guard troops to support states by operating 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 April 15, 2020, fifty-two states/territories have activated their State National Guard. Over 31,600 Air and Army National Guard professionals are supporting the COVID-19 response at the direction of their Governors. Current National Guard COVID-19 response missions include, but are not limited to:

- Staffing SEOCs to synchronize National Guard efforts with local and state mission partners to plan and execute an effective response
- Sewing and distributing masks and protective equipment for mission essential personnel
- 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
- Providing transportation and assessment support to healthcare providers
- Assisting with disinfecting/cleaning of common public spaces

WHAT ARE THE U.S. CANADA AND U.S. MEXICO BORDER TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS?

The United States and Canada, as well as the United States and Mexico are temporarily restricting all non-essential travel across the U.S. 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. border to allow travel across the border to support critical work. The updated travel restrictions for U.S./Canada can be found [here](#) and for U.S./Mexico [here](#).

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](#)
- FMCSA [Emergency Declaration Extension](#)

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

WHAT IS THE CURRENT GUIDANCE ON MAKING HAND SANITIZER?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a [Temporary Policy for Preparation of Certain Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer Products](#). For additional guidance on how to comply with these requirements, contact FDA at COVID-19-HandSanitizers@fda.hhs.gov.

WHAT ARE THE RESPIRATORY PROTECTION RECOMMENDATIONS TO MANGAGE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19?

The Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued an enforcement guidance [memorandum](#) for Respiratory Protection. The guidance outlines enforcement discretion to permit the extended use and reuse of respirators and the use of respirators beyond their manufacturer's recommended shelf life.

The CDC issued [guidance](#) on April 3, 2020 for the public to wear cloth face coverings in public settings to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

ARE THERE NEW "CALL BEFORE YOU DIG" GUIDELINES?

April is National Safe Digging Month. While some areas of the country are seeing typical digging activity, others are emphasizing online requests or discouraging nonessential digging. Visit www.call811.com for more information about safe digging. Social media messages and other resources to promote the safe digging can be found at [PHMSA](#) and the [Common Ground Alliance](#).

WILL INDUSTRY MUTUAL ASSISTANCE BE USED FOR OUTAGES DURING THE PANDEMIC?

The [Electric Subsector Coordinating Council](#) has a dedicated team analyzing how restoration processes and procedures may need to be modified given the known health risks. During non-health emergencies, such as severe storms, electric utilities, independent power producers and suppliers often accelerate power restoration by bringing in additional skilled workers from organizations and contractors outside the area through mutual assistance.

These mutual assistance processes were demonstrated earlier this week when severe weather impacted the Southern and Eastern portions of the U.S., causing 1.3 million customers power outages at the peak. For these responses, the mutual aid process brought in additional workers and equipment from nearby utilities and contractors to assist with assessment and repair. Crews utilized PPE and social distancing per the CDC and OSHA guidelines to perform their restoration duties.