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 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) began monitoring the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in January 2020. 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.

The DOE ESF #12 Regional Coordinators remain at enhanced watched for COVID-19, across all FEMA Regions. DOE continues to hold regular coordination calls with interagency and industry partners. DOE continues to work closely with partners to help facilitate safe response and restoration activities during the pandemic. In November the ERO formed a COVID-19 Phase II Working Group to evaluate and share information on processes and procedures for energy sector worker prioritization, plans for vaccination distribution, and access to Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and testing during the emerging threat of increased COVID-19 cases. The group is working with federal, state, and industry partners to connect them with the right processes to address resource 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. On October 28, 2020, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) issued an alert warning against ransomware activity targeting the healthcare and public health sector.

In response to COVID-19, the U.S. energy sector has taken actions to mitigate potential impacts on the industry's workforce and operations. 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.

COVID-19 RESOURCES

Government Web Links:
- DOE: Coronavirus Hub

- CDC: [COVID-19 Data Summary](#)
- CDC: [Vaccine Homepage](#)
- OSHA: [COVID-19 Control and Prevention](#)
- 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): [APPA Coronavirus page](#)
- American Gas Association (AGA): [AGA Coronavirus page](#)
- American Petroleum Institute (API): [API Pandemic Resources page](#)
- American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPM): [AFPM COVID-19 page](#)
- American Public Gas Association (APGA): [APGA Coronavirus Resources page](#)
- Edison Electric Institute (EEI): [EEI Pandemic page](#)
- Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI): [EPRI COVID-19 Page](#)
- Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC): [ESCC COVID-19 Resources](#)
- International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC): [IADC COVID-19 Update page](#)
- International Liquid Terminals Association (ILTA): [ILTA Pandemic Resources page](#)
- Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA): [INGAA COVID-19 Response page](#)
- National Rural Electric Cooperatives (NRECA): [NRECA COVID-19 page](#)
- Petroleum Marketers Association of America (PMAA): [PMAA Coronavirus Resources page](#)
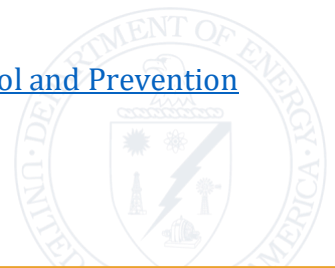- Offshore Operators Committee: [COVID-19 Mitigations page](#)

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 with restricted access should follow CDC and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance:
- CDC [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- OSHA [COVID-19 Worker Safety](#); [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces;](#) [Control and Prevention](#)
- OSHA guidance for [workers performing in-home repairs](#) services.

ARE ENERGY PERSONNEL AND SERVICES CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL?

CESER worked with industry and DHS CISA to put together a list of guidance for essential critical infrastructure workers (ECIW), which included electricity (across all sources), petroleum, natural gas and propane 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

On May 6, 2020, DOE Secretary Dan Brouillette sent letters to all of the U.S. Governors encouraging support for essential workers in the energy sector. The letters highlighted the joint statement from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and NARUC urging the consideration of utility workers as essential, as well as FERC's recent orders and actions to assure the reliable operation of energy infrastructure. The letters are the second from DOE's Secretary to the states in support of ECIW. In addition to calling for continued freedom of movement within restricted areas for ECIW, the letters note that additional measures are needed. It is equally important that ECIW have access to PPE, testing services, and cleaning supplies. Reliance on energy is a key interdependency amongst all Critical Infrastructure sectors, making energy reliability and resilience a fundamental need for national safety and security.

HOW CAN MY COMPANY ACQUIRE PPE FOR ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL?

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 PPE for essential workers. On August 10, 2020 FEMA issued a Temporary Final Rule extended the PPE Allocation order for domestic use. The supply chain for PPE has improved with some localized exceptions.

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.

HOW CAN MY COMPANY ACQUIRE TESTING FOR ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL?

CESER worked with multiple FEMA task forces and federal, industry and state partners to identify new testing options and best practices as they became available. Energy industry suppliers and

infrastructure operators are identified "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.

On April 23, 2020, DHS CISA released guidance for operations centers and control rooms across the 16 critical infrastructure sectors, including energy, required to operate in a pandemic environment. The guidance recommends prioritized testing by medical professionals for asymptomatic personnel performing essential jobs in support of operations centers and control rooms. Some states have begun prioritizing testing of non-symptomatic essential energy workers prior to sequestration.

The CDC updated the testing overview page on October 21, 2020. COVID testing locations can be found on the State Health Department websites.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COVID-19 TESTS?

There are two types of kinds of tests available for COVID-19 according to the CDC: viral tests and antibody tests. A viral test is used to detect a current infection. An antibody test can detect a previous COVID-19 infection. An antibody test may not show a current infection and should not be used as the only way to diagnose someone with a current COVID-19 infection. It is not yet known if having antibodies can protect someone from being infected with the virus again, or how long that protection might last. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has more information on types of tests.

WHAT PREPARATIONS ARE IN PLACE FOR VACCINE DISTRIBUTION ONCE IT IS AVAILABLE?

In the U.S., there is not yet an authorized or approved vaccine to prevent COVID-19. There are multiple potential vaccines currently being developed. The CDC posted Interim Operations Guidance for Jurisdictions with summaries of implementation plan listed by state and territory. Each state has identified phases for distributing the vaccine consistent with the CDC interim guidance. State and local governments have the authority to determine the phases for distribution. The DOE COVID-19 Phase II Working Group is working with state and regional partners to identify prioritization processes for energy sector ECIW.

The NGA released guidance on preparations for a COVID-19 vaccine and considerations for mass distribution. On October 19, 2020, NGA issued vaccine questions to the White House for consideration.

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

Some energy companies have chosen to implement 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 duration expectations
- 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 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

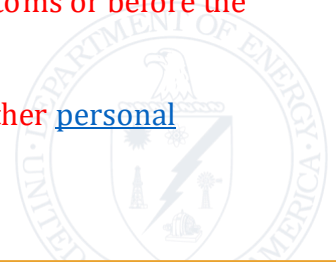## WHAT IS THE GUIDANCE ON MAINTAININ A SAFE WORKPLACE FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE WORKERS?

The ESCC COVID-19 Resource Guide provides the electric sector with methods to assess and mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic with four strategic priorities:

- "Industry plans should be coordinated with state/local governments and executed in phases"

- "Focus on the health and safety of our workforce and our customers"

- "Anticipate and address any technology-related challenges and cyber threats associated with the return the workplace"

- "Clear and consistent internal and external messaging"

The Oil and Natural Gas Subsector Coordinating Council (ONG SCC) released the ONG COVID-19 Responsible Recovery Compendium identifying challenges and mitigation strategies for the different ONG value chains.

The CDC updated Critical Infrastructure Sector Response Planning on November 16, 2020, noting:

- Growing evidence of transmission risk from infected people without symptoms or before the onset of recognized symptoms (pre-symptomatic)
- Ongoing community transmission in many parts of the country
- Continued focus on reducing transmission through social distancing and other personal prevention strategies

- All workers should wear a cloth mask in accordance with CDC and OSHA guidance and any state or local requirements
- Reintegration of exposed critical infrastructure workers who are not experiencing any symptoms and have not tested positive back into onsite operations should be used as a last resort and only in limited circumstances, such as when cessation of operation of a facility may cause serious harm or danger to public health or safety

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.

WILL TYPES OF RESTRICTIONS MAY AFFECT ACCESS?

Domestic travel advisories are not expected to affect critical services or travel for energy sector essential employees. 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.

Several states have issued mandatory or recommended travel advisories that apply a 14-day quarantine for travelers from areas with identified hot spots or increased rates of COVID-19 infections. Some FEMA regions have worked with the states and territories to develop pre-travel programs to test essential workers, prior to arrival. In cases where access is restricted, the States have defined protocols for allowing access for essential personnel.

The CDC updated travel health notices to include COVID-19 travel recommendations by country. Although the CDC recommends people stay home as much as possible, new guidance for the different modes of travel was issued for when travel is required.

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. On May 6, 2020 the Council of Governors Co-Chairs sent a letter requesting the Secretary of Defense work with the White House to extend the use of Title 32 National Guard operations beyond May 31, 2020. On August 3, 2020, a presidential memorandum extended and modified funding for National Guard units under state control to December 31, 2020 with certain cost share provisions.

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. These measures have been extended until December 21, 2020. DOE ESF#12 responders are available to work with the FEMA National Response Coordination Center and DHS to coordinate any issues with critical energy infrastructure located near the U.S. border and for travel across the border to support critical work. Guidance for travel to the U.S./Canada can be found here and for U.S./Mexico here. The CDC continues to update travel guidance, including travel to other countries.

HOW CAN MY COMPANY ENSURE TIMELY AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORT OF GOODS AND SERVICES?

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Emergency Declaration
The DOT Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) issued a Federal Motor Carrier Administration Declaration and an updated 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. On September 11, 2020, FMCSA extended and modified the hour of service waiver for motor carriers to December 31, 2020:

- FMCSA COVID Emergency Declarations, Waivers, Exemptions and Permits homepage

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.

HOW DID THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT & INDUSTRY PREPARE TO RESPOND 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 during the multiple hurricanes, storms and wildfires that occurred since spring. 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. The ESCC Resource Guide reflects that COVID-19 safety procedures did not create significant delays in restoration efforts with some opportunities to prepare for future responses.

In preparation for this year's hurricane season FEMA issued the "COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance for 2020 Hurricane Season" to help response organizations and public health officials prepare for disasters, while continuing to respond to and recover from COVID-19. The guidance

included preparedness and response checklists, public message examples, and other resources. The federal, state, and industry partners were able to respond and support restoration during the very active and ongoing 2020 hurricane season in which there were over 30 named storms.

The CDC has consolidated resources for Natural Disasters, Severe Weather and during the COVID-19 pandemic to help guide hurricane safety, public disaster shelter practices and wildfire smoke considerations.

The NGA issued a memo with planning considerations for concurrent emergencies during the on-going COVID-19 health crisis. The memo encourages Governors to work across the emergency management enterprise to prepare for a confluence of events to ensure that their states are ready to protect lives and property. CISA issued an alert to remain vigilant for malicious cyber activity targeting potential disaster victims and charitable donors following a hurricane.

WHAT IS CONTACT TRACING AND HOW DOES IT APPLY TO ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE CRITICAL WORKERS?

Contact tracing is a strategy employed by local and state health department personnel with specialized training to prevent further spread of COVID-19. Contact tracing is one part of the process to control the spread of the disease, supporting patients, and warning contacts of exposure. To protect patient privacy, contacts are only informed that they may have been exposed to a patient with the infection. They are not told the identity of the patient who may have exposed them. The CDC released a Contact Tracing Training Plan and resources for medical professionals and local health department personnel. The ESCC drafted a set of planning considerations that can help the electric power industry develop approaches that fit local conditions. Some local and state governments are also launching contact tracing programs to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

The CDC updated contact tracing resources for health departments on November 23, 2020.

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 FERC, as well as the U.S. Department of Transportation (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.

NERC issued a special report Pandemic Preparedness and Operational Assessment assessing the reliability considerations and operational preparedness of the bulk power system owners and operators during pandemic conditions. On August 13, NERC extended its expanded Self-Logging Program through December 31, 2020, to allow registered entities to log instances of potential

noncompliance with minimal or moderate risk related to their coronavirus response. NERC will continue to defer on-site audits and other on-site activities through the end of 2020.

In November, NERC issued its 2020-2021 Winter Reliability Assessment. The assessment finds sufficient resource capacity is in place across North America to meet winter demand. Noting how extreme weather can challenge grid reliability in specific areas, the assessment identifies higher risk areas that are susceptible to emergency operating actions.