



March 23, 2020

The Honorable Kevin Stitt
Governor of Oklahoma
State Capitol
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

RE: Oklahoma Construction Industry and COVID-19

Dear Governor Stitt:

Thank you for your efforts during this current public health crisis. ABC recognizes and sincerely appreciates your leadership and the work of your staff and those who are spending every hour to keep Oklahomans safe during this time. You have always understood the importance of construction to the state's economy, and we hope you will recognize the need to continue in a safe manner that follows best practices and implements the OSHA guidelines.

Members of ABC of Oklahoma are committed to the health, safety and welfare of our workforce and the public. We write to you today to ask you to treat construction as an essential service for the state and refrain from any action to curtail ongoing construction projects if a "shelter in place" directive ever becomes warranted in Oklahoma. As higher risk industries are being impacted by the spread of COVID-19, it is more important to the long-term health of Oklahoma's economy to keep the construction industry intact.

Based on input from the CDC, OSHA has developed a hierarchy of industry risk for COVID-19. The lowest risk industries are those with workers that have "minimal occupational contact with the public and other co-workers." Construction jobsites are not densely populated work areas. Construction sites are a unique workplace 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 briefings are already part of the construction industry culture, and with the additional guidelines developed by OSHA to address COVID-19, briefings include the extra precautions recommended by the CDC and OSHA.

The impact of shutting down construction work in Oklahoma will severely impact the construction of critical infrastructure and housing. Worker layoffs will make it extremely difficult for construction companies to meet the demand to maintain existing healthcare facilities and build new ones, retrofit existing buildings for emergency use and provide new transportation corridors for people and materials.

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Moreover, such a hit to the construction industry workforce in Oklahoma will undermine current and future efforts of recovery due to natural disasters. A virus pandemic does not halt tornadoes, floods or other natural disasters.

Our association has encouraged our members to implement strict measures for the safety of their workers and the public during this pandemic. We've distributed OSHA 3990-03 guidance on preparing the workplace in light of COVID-19 and encouraged worker education. With the low risk nature of construction related to the virus and the existing heavy emphasis on safety in our industry to implement protections for workers and the public, we urge you to recognize construction as essential services that should be continued if a "shelter in place" directive ever becomes warranted in Oklahoma.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Smaligo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "S".

John Smaligo
President/CEO
ABC of Oklahoma