

INSIGHT

Pandemic causes additional safety measures for job sites and travel practices

Despite the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, construction projects are continuing in many places and the workers on those projects have been exempt from local and state stay-at-home orders. Therefore, contractors and field staff are considering ways to take additional safety precautions during this challenging time.

“I’m assigned to a construction project with about 100 workers. As we arrive on the job site, we go to the mobile nurse station and get our temperatures taken," said Breck Summerford, a lead construction engineering technician at Bartlett & West, sharing his job site’s COVID-19 safety measures. "Workers with temperatures within safe CDC guidelines are given a wrist band to wear for the day, with the color of the wristband changing every day.”

In addition to daily temperature checks, the following are some tips and additional safety measures both for on the job site and while travelling for work during this pandemic.

Steps to make construction job sites safer during COVID-19

- Stagger shifts/crews when possible
- Take temperatures of workers to watch for illness
- Have workers wear face coverings
- Use physical distancing during job briefing and work
- Take roll call instead of collecting signatures at job briefings
- Identifying choke points in buildings under construction and work to resolve them

- Provide hand washing stations and make hand sanitizer available
- For smaller equipment, try to maintain and not share equipment and gear
- Limit use to one person per vehicle; sanitize the vehicle before and after use
- Be assertive in requesting physical distance from the public and other workers

Additional safety tips for travel and field staff

- Pack a cooler of food from home for shorter or day trips
- Consider where the nearest care facilities are if needed—especially in rural communities
- Bring your own necessities including sanitizer whenever possible
- Wear face coverings while out in the public
- Know travel restriction of the places you are travelling to; know if any kind of documentation for travel permissions is needed
- Sanitize, sanitize, sanitize in hotels, at the gas station pump, when getting supplies or food

“My personal hotel habits now include spraying the surfaces with disinfecting spray," Summerford said. "I also spread out hand or bath towels on the desktops and countertops before using them. I have other hotel habits, but not necessarily related to coronavirus, such as using bottled water for drinking, making coffee and brushing teeth, spraying the shower with a cleaner and wearing flip flops instead of walking around the hotel room barefoot or sock-footed.”

The overall takeaway is be proactive about considering what health and safety challenges may exist and how to prepare for them.