



March 27, 2020

The Honorable Bill Lee
Governor
State Capitol, 1st Floor
600 Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

Sent Via Electronic Delivery

Dear Governor Lee,

Thank you for your efforts in the wake of the public health crisis in which we currently find ourselves. We appreciate your leadership and the work of your staff and those who are spending every waking hour keeping us safe.

We're "doing our part" too. Our members, and the 120,000 Tennesseans working in the industry are adhering to all public health guidelines set forth by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Tennessee Department of Public Health (TDOH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

In fact, we are taking extra precautions to keep our employees safe and protect Tennesseans. Construction, by nature, is a practice of social distancing. Most projects have workers dispersed on tasks located more than 6 feet apart.

We are also reaching out to support our community in numerous ways – donating PPE to healthcare workers, making food bank contributions and checking in on our seniors and neighbors in need.

Please, we have one simple message: keep Tennessee working.

While the nation and our state deal with the public health crisis, many Tennesseans are still reeling from the March 3rd tornadoes. Many homes and businesses are either damaged or destroyed, and this health crisis has hit just as rebuilding begins in the aftermath of those storms. Homeowners and business owners need our resources to rebuild, and we need the opportunity to help them.

Tennessee citizens are coping with a variety of restrictions as a result of the health crisis, it is essential that they have access to our professionals to build and maintain essential services like plumbing, electrical, HVAC systems, water/wastewater treatment plants, power generation and distribution facilities, hospitals and roads, and provide them shelter.

Aside from providing comfort, this equipment is vital for both health and safety reasons as well as volume of productivity, particularly for air filtration and food and medical supply preservation, especially in this time of quarantine. When equipment fails, qualified, licensed personnel must be able to repair or replace it as quickly as possible to ensure continued operations.

Simply put, our work supports the front lines of this crisis – we support hospitals and health care facilities; we support education facilities; we support the transportation system, and, we support first responders.

Stopping our work will have significant, unintended consequences, and contractual implications for not only those on the front line but also for our economy. Work stoppages in this industry will reverberate through financial markets and unwind a network of contracting and employment issues. At a time when the unemployment infrastructure is already being stressed, adding 120,000 more would be catastrophic.

Additionally, it's imperative that permit and inspection personnel at all levels are available to keep these systems operational. If we are to shelter in place statewide, we need to continue to build homes, apartments, and other places of shelter.

Governor, we understand the significance of this health crisis and we fully respect and will comply with all restrictions and guidelines. However, we respectfully ask that you allow our industry to continue to do the important work of supporting our front lines and caring for Tennessee.

We request that you consider construction, and its supply chain, an essential service, so that individuals may continue to provide any services or perform any work necessary to the operations and maintenance of “essential infrastructure,” including, but not limited to, public works construction, the permitting, inspection, construction, transfer and recording of ownership, of housing and anything incidental thereto, water, sewer, gas, electrical, roads and highways.

Sincerely,

*American Institute of Architects in Tennessee
American Council of Engineering Companies of TN
Associated Builders & Contractors – West Tennessee
Association of General Contractors of East Tennessee
Association of General Contractors of Tennessee
Home Builders Association of Tennessee
Tennessee Concrete Association
Tennessee Gas Association
Tennessee Mining Association
Tennessee Municipal Electric Power Association
Tennessee Road Builders Association
Tennessee Society of Professional Engineers*