

SOUTHWESTERN POWER ADMINISTRATION PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: SWPA Statement on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 24, 2020

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Statement on SWPA Preparation for Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Updated: March 24, 2020

Tulsa, OK – Southwestern Power Administration (Southwestern or SWPA) continues to take active measures to protect its employees and the community at large while making sure that the lights stay on and the grid stays resilient during the coronavirus outbreak.

“As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, we are continually assessing the needs of our organization, as well as following the direction provided by the Department of Energy (DOE) and other partners,” stated Administrator Mike Wech in an internal email issued to Southwestern employees on Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

In the email, Wech issued an order that all Southwestern facilities be closed to the general public, with no visitation to offices while the restriction is in place.

Wech’s message came on the heels of an earlier notification from DOE allowing maximum telework flexibility for employees to accommodate state and local responses to the outbreak, including, but not limited to, school closings.

In support of the DOE guidance, Southwestern conducted a successful telework/accountability exercise on Thursday, March 19, 2020. According to Southwestern Security Officer Jay Parvin, the exercise was a complete success, both from a network connectivity standpoint and an accountability standpoint.

“Today we completed an accountability exercise in 59 minutes,” Parvin reported. “The accountability exercise was not announced, and no prior notice was provided to managers, directors, or supervisors. With 80 personnel on telework status, it could have been especially challenging.”

Following the successful telework/accountability exercise, Administrator Wech issued another order to employees, stating that, effective Monday, March 23, 2020, “All SWPA Federal employees that are telework ready/capable and have a telework agreement in place should telework until further notice.”

Wech’s notice also contained guidance regarding employee scheduling in mission-critical functions to ensure those functions are maintained while providing for the protection of employees. It also outlined Southwestern’s plans to conduct a thorough evaluation of all planned and proposed power system maintenance in order to implement ongoing social distancing of affected employees.

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“We will continue to follow the directions of the DOE and continue to coordinate with our industry partners and other Federal agencies,” says Administrator Wech. “And we encourage employees to continue to practice safe and healthy procedures when it comes to work and family life.”

As of the date of this press release, Southwestern has had no confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19). According to agency senior leadership and safety officials, Southwestern will handle any potential staff exposures utilizing the COVID-19 hotline process provided by DOE. A summary of DOE response efforts is included for reference.

Southwestern Power Administration is an agency of the U.S. Department of Energy. Its mission is to market and reliably deliver Federal hydroelectric power with preference to public bodies and cooperatives. This is accomplished by maximizing the use of Federal assets to repay the Federal investment and participating with other water resource users in an effort to balance their diverse interests with power needs within broad parameters set by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and implementing public policy. For more information, see <http://www.swpa.gov>.



COVID-19 Energy Sector Response Efforts and Frequently Asked Questions

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) is part of the federal mitigation and response to COVID-19. CESER and the ERO are holding regular calls with state and industry partners, to discuss preparations, provide awareness, and assess issues that may require federal support, including long-term concerns due to supply chain disruptions. Coordination and associated tasks and Requests for Information (RFIs) from the federal, state, and energy sector will continue into the near future.

The ERO is activated at a Level III 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. The ERO is identifying a list of essential ESF#12 functions and preparing staffing plans for these positions.

CESER advises energy sector partners to remain vigilant to cybersecurity threats. CESER also encourages 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

General Web Links:

- CDC [COVID-19 Situation Summary](#)
- Global Status: [World Health Organization, Coronavirus](#)
- DHS CISA Insights: [Risk Management for Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- CISA [COVID-19 Homepage](#)
- DHS CISA [Memorandum and Guidance on Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce](#)
- FEMA [National Business EOC Operations Dashboard](#)

Energy Web Links:

- DOE [Coronavirus Hub](#)
- Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC) [COVID-19 Resources](#)
- Edison Electric Institute [Pandemic page](#)
- American Public Power Association [Coronavirus page](#)
- National Rural Electric Cooperatives [COVID-19 page](#)
- American Petroleum Institute [Pandemic Guide](#)
- American Gas Association [COVID-19 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 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 OSHA guidance:

- CDC [Pandemic Influenza Resources](#)
- CDC [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) [COVID-19 Worker Safety](#)

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 with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to put together a list of essential critical infrastructure workers. The guidance can be found below:

<https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/CISA-Guidance-on-Essential-Critical-Infrastructure-Workers-1-20-508c.pdf>

HOW CAN ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL ACCESS 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 EOCs 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?

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 workers in the healthcare field and for first responders. CESER is working with the interagency to elevate the need for PPE in the energy sector.

WHAT DOES “SHELTER IN PLACE” MEAN AND 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 National Governor’s Association website:

<https://www.nga.org/coronavirus/>.

WILL DOMESTIC TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AFFECT ACCESS BETWEEN STATE BORDERS?

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

WHAT DOES THE PARTIAL CLOSURE OF THE CANADIAN U.S. BORDER MEAN?

The current restrictions do not apply to citizens of the United States and Canada. If such restrictions are widened, DOE will work with the FEMA National Response Coordination Center and DHS to identify energy sector employees for critical energy infrastructure located near the border to allow travel across the border to support critical work.

CAN THE USE OF WINTER BLEND FUEL CONTINUE BEYOND THE MAY 1 SWITCH TO SUMMER BLEND?

Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) Waiver Requests

Industry groups are requesting RVP waivers asking to continue using the existing supply of winter blend fuels after the May 1, 2020, switch to the summer blend. Also being discussed is the possibility of getting a waiver to mix the existing winter blend with the summer blend.

- 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 [Frequently Asked Questions related to 3/19/20 Emergency Declaration](#)
- FMCSA [Commercial Driver's License Waiver 3/24/20](#)

Emergency Declarations Waivers, Exemptions and Permits

- FMCSA [Emergency Declarations, Waivers, Exemptions and Permits](#) homepage
- FMCSA list of [State Emergency Declarations](#)

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON PORT ACCESS?

The Coast Guard Assistant Commandant issued 3 Marine Safety Information Bulletins (MSIB) on Novel Coronavirus.

MSIB 8/20 issued 3/19/20 [Mariner Credentials](#)

MSIB 7/20 issued 3/19/20 [Port and Facility Operations](#)

MSIB 6/20 issued 3/13/20 [Vessel Reporting Requirements for Illness or Death](#)

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.

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will be updated regularly with new information as it becomes available.

