

How Do “Shelter in Place” and “Social Distancing” Orders Impact My Jobsite?



COVID-19

It's on American shores and its impact on the nation's business community – especially small businesses – is real and already underway. How big of an impact this global pandemic will have on companies, large and small, is all but a guessing game at this point; and quite honestly one that only helps to ratchet up our anxiety levels.

As a small technology startup, our organization has hundreds of electrical contracting partners across the country, many of whom are owners

of small businesses. So, as all of us brace for the continuing avalanche of news headlines around the latest statistics, and regulations, orders, and statutes from local, state, and federal governments, taking full stock of how these developments impact our business, and the business of our strategic partners is essential. Only together can we combat fear with facts and ensure we all weather the approaching storm and come out the stronger for it.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

This guidance detailed in this eGuide is not a standard or regulation, and it creates no legal obligations. It contains recommendations from third-party sources that are advisory in nature, informational in content, and are intended to assist industry partners in providing a safe and healthful workplace. Please be sure to consult local authorities to ensure compliance with specific regional, statewide, and federal laws.

INTRODUCTION

Keeping our communities, businesses, and employees safe is of the utmost importance as the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic continues to sweep across the United States and world. With a daily deluge of news headlines, press conferences, and orders issued by local municipalities, states, and federal agencies, keeping tabs on all of it is no easy task. This is especially true for small businesses that operate within the trades and who make up a key segment of SBT Alliance's industry partners.

But understanding how these developments impact our businesses, employees, clients, and communities is critical in order to make important business decisions that are based on facts and not driven by fear. Something that we all must do to weather the approaching storm and come out stronger as a business and community partner.

That's way SBT Alliance is committed to sharing the key takeaways from our own in-depth research into the latest news, regulations, and orders issued by government agencies. We're all in this together, and if we can play a role in helping to disseminate fact over fiction to help our industry partners move forward safely during these unprecedented times, then we must do so.

As such, SBT Alliance will issue a slew of research related eGuides over the next few weeks and months that will tackle some of the most common questions many of our small business tradespeople have been asking. We understand that these are challenging and exceptional times that no one could have planned. Still, it is our hope and desire that with the right information, we can all move forward safely to keep our businesses intact, our communities safe, and our clients cared for.

Thank you for counting SBT Alliance as one of your trusted industry partners; it's our goal to return the favor and arm you with the tools you need to keep business running safely and efficiently.

In this first eGuide, we dig deep into the latest slew of "Shelter in Place" and Social Distancing" orders and seek to uncover how these latest announcements do or do not impact active job sites.

In partnership,

Benjamin Buchanan
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BECOMING FACT-DRIVEN VS. FEAR-DRIVEN

Within the last seven days, we've all seen a deluge of orders from coast-to-coast, ranging from "Shelter in Place" and "Social Distancing" to all-out "No Construction" orders issued. But what do these orders really mean, and how do they impact the active job sites you may have running right now? Let's take a look.

With headlines like, *"All Californians, Nearly 40 Million People, Have Been Ordered To Stay Home To Stop The Spread Of The Coronavirus,"* (BuzzFeed.com, 3/19/2020), it's quite easy to walk away with a feeling of Armageddon. Limiting the spread of COVID-19 is critical; there are no mixing words here. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention has a slew of Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employees (CDC.gov) that every business owner should review and implement where possible.

This past Friday, March 20th Los Angeles County's "Safer at Home" order went into effect. *What does this order mean for an electrical contractor or construction worker?*

According to reporting by the Los Angeles Daily News here are some the facts about the LA County Order:

Here are the limitations the county edict imposes:

- *Malls, shopping centers, playgrounds, and "nonessential retail businesses" are all required to close.*
- *Public and private gatherings with more than ten individuals are prohibited.*
- *In the city of Los Angeles, it's a little more strict: Gatherings with more than five individuals are prohibited, according to its order, though it doesn't apply to private homes.*
- *Outdoor events held in open spaces are still allowed, albeit with significant restrictions. In essence, attendees are required to be separated by at least 6 feet, and hand-washing facilities with soap and water or hand sanitizers must be present. There also needs to be signage warning not to attend if they have a cough or fever.*
- *Gyms and fitness centers are still closed.*
- *Bars also remain closed, and restaurants still can't do any dine-in service.*

But you're still allowed to...

- *Go outside to hike, run, bike, walk, and other activities, provided you're staying at least 6 feet away from other people at all times.*
- *Order from restaurants offering takeout, delivery, or drive-thru.*

And how about businesses themselves? The Los Angeles Daily News report goes on to say:

Here's a more complete list of what qualifies as "essential businesses" which are allowed to stay open:

- *Grocery stores, certified farmers' markets, farm and produce stands, food banks, convenience stores, pet supply stores and places that sell household consumer goods, such as cleaning or personal care products.*
- *Farming, livestock and fishing supplies.*
- *Businesses that provide food, shelter and social services for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals.*
- *Media services, including newspapers, television, radio and podcasts.*
- *Gas stations, as well as auto supply and repair shops, including car dealerships.*
- *Banks and credit unions*
- *Hardware stores, nurseries and building supply shops*
- *Tradespeople, such as plumbers, electricians, janitors, handyman services, carpenters, moving services, tree maintenance, property managers and private security.*
- *Medicinal cannabis retailers*
- *Laundromats and laundry services, including dry cleaners.*
- *Personal grooming services, such as barbers and hairdressers.*
- *Taxis and other private transportation providers, such as Uber and Lyft*
- *Home-based care for seniors, adults, disabled persons or children.*
- *Professional services, such as lawyers, accountants and others.*
- *Hotels, motels and shared rental facilities.*
- *Military contractors.*
- *Health care providers, including hospitals, clinics, dentists, mental health professionals and other ancillary medical services.*
- *Veterinary services*

BECOMING FACT-DRIVEN VS. FEAR-DRIVEN

Here's the critical bullet-point that applies to many of our strategic partners, specifically those who own small businesses as tradespeople:

“Tradespeople, such as plumbers, electricians, janitors, handyman services, carpenters, moving services, tree maintenance, property managers and private security.”

This is a crucial point to understand as one considers the impact of a “Shelter in Place/Safer at Home” order and its effect on a current job site of a tradesperson.

The reporting additionally goes on to detail those businesses/sectors that would be required to close in an effort to quell the spread of COVID-19; these include ([read the full article here](#)):

- *Gyms and fitness centers must remain closed*
- *Bars must remain closed*
- *Malls, shopping centers, and “nonessential retail businesses” must now close*
- *Playgrounds must now close*
- *Restaurants must now close dine-in services but can provide take out/delivery services.*

As with all state and local regulations, each county, municipality, and state will have their own variations of such orders. A prime example is the City of Boston, MA instituting an injunction to stop all active construction sites within the city ([read more here](#)).

So, is this LA County “Safer at Home” order – or ones like it (see Ohio’s Stay at Home Order) – the same as this City of Boston order to cease all construction? **No, it is not.** As of this article’s publication, Boston is the only major US city to issue such an order that squashes all active construction sites. And based on reporting by the Boston Business Journal, the Governor of Massachusetts, Charlie Baker, has “no plans” to shut construction across the Bay State ([read more here](#)).

Knowledge is power, and using facts versus fear will only help in making the right business decisions for your organization to move forward while ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of all.

Does social distancing require me to close my job site?

The next thing a lot of our industry partners have been busy talking about lately is the role of “social distancing” and their perceived need to close job sites as a result. So, in order to practice CDC recommended social distancing, are you required to close a project site?

The simple answer is **no; you do not**. Based on the latest guidelines from OSHA, there are many steps that all employers can take to reduce your workers’ risk of exposure to COVID-19. ***Some of these guidelines include:***

- *Implementing workplace controls to control and limit workplace hazards posing possible exposure.*
- *Minimizing contact among workers, clients, and customers by maintaining a 6-foot distance between parties.*
- *Establish safe work practices that include procedures that reduce duration, frequency, or intensity of exposure to a hazard, including requiring regular hand washing or using alcohol-based hand rubs.*

This latest set of OSHA guidelines ([learn more here](#)) also provide a classification of worker exposure to COVID-19. According to this OSHA risk classification:

“...risk of occupational exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, during an outbreak may vary from very high to high, medium, or lower (caution risk). The level of risk depends in part on the industry type, need for contact within 6 feet of people known to be, or suspected of being infected with SARS-CoV-2...The Occupational Risk Pyramid shows the four exposure risk levels in the shape of a pyramid to represent probable distribution of risk. Most American workers will likely fall in the lower exposure risk (caution) or medium exposure risk levels.”

RISK ASSESSMENT

The key line that stuck out to us, and should to our strategic partners as well, is the fact that: “Most American workers will likely fall in the lower exposure risk (caution) or medium exposure risk levels.”

The OSHA Occupational Risk Classification goes on to define those occupations that have the highest risk of exposure; this includes the following:

VERY HIGH EXPOSURE RISK

Very high exposure risk jobs are those with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 during specific medical, postmortem, or laboratory procedures. Workers in this category include:

- *Healthcare workers (e.g., doctors, nurses, dentists, paramedics, emergency medical technicians) performing aerosol-generating procedures (e.g., intubation, cough induction procedures, bronchoscopies, some dental procedures and exams, or invasive specimen collection) on known or suspected COVID-19 patients.*
- *Healthcare or laboratory personnel collecting or handling specimens from known or suspected COVID-19 patients (e.g., manipulating cultures from known or suspected COVID-19 patients).*
- *Morgue workers performing autopsies, which generally involve aerosol-generating procedures, on the bodies of people who are known to have, or suspected of having, COVID-19 at the time of their death.*

HIGH EXPOSURE RISK

High exposure risk jobs are those with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19. Workers in this category include:

- *Healthcare delivery and support staff (e.g., doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff who must enter patients' rooms) exposed to known or suspected COVID-19 patients. (Note: when such workers perform aerosol-generating procedures, their exposure risk level becomes very high.)*
- *Medical transport workers (e.g., ambulance vehicle operators) moving known or suspected COVID-19 patients in enclosed vehicles.*
- *Mortuary workers involved in preparing (e.g., for burial or cremation) the bodies of people who are known to have, or suspected of having, COVID-19 at the time of their death.*

As most of our industry partners would not find themselves in the above two classifications, we were curious where would a tradesperson find themselves? Taking a more in-depth look at OSHA's Occupational Risk Classification, there are two other classifications which are as follows:

MEDIUM EXPOSURE RISK

Medium exposure risk jobs include those that require frequent and/or close contact with (i.e., within 6 feet of) people who may be infected with SARS-CoV-2, but who are not known or suspected COVID-19 patients. In areas without ongoing community transmission, workers in this risk group may have frequent contact with travelers who may return from international locations with widespread COVID-19 transmission. In areas where there is ongoing community transmission, workers in this category may have contact be with the general public (e.g., in schools, high-population-density work environments, and some high-volume retail settings).

LOWER EXPOSURE RISK (CAUTION)

Lower exposure risk (caution) jobs are those that do not require contact with people known to be, or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2 nor frequent close contact with (i.e., within 6 feet of) the general public. Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers.

As you, our industry partners, evaluate the impact of social distancing and its relation to the operational functionality of your job site, we recommend using the above OSHA Occupational Risk Classification as a guide. This OSHA guide will help you to categorize your job site so you can make the decision that makes the safest, most informed, and appropriate choice for you, your business, and the community you serve.

As we all continue to learn, adjust, and combat the COVID-19 pandemic, we're committed to keeping your businesses moving forward safely. We will be sure to continue to share the latest research, tips, advice, and industry insights that we uncover to help you weather the storm and come out the stronger for it.