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Time to start thinking about how to re-open construction - by Joseph Camilo

May 15, 2020 - Construction Design & Engineering

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Massachusetts isn't out of the woods yet, but with the spread of COVID-19 finally appearing to plateau, it's time to start thinking about how to open up construction and the rest of the state economy. The Baker administration has also begun the process, with the appointment of a Reopening Advisory Group chaired by lieutenant governor Karyn Polito.

One of the few things that appears certain is that reopening will be a gradual process, not just returning to the way things were before. The reopening of additional construction will be accompanied by a continuation of enhanced safety measures that have been in place during the pandemic.

Hints for what at least the first phase of reopening might look like can be gleaned from the best practices Boston has put in place for emergency construction that is still underway in the city. Boston mayor Walsh has announced that these rules will continue to be in force when construction begins to reopen in Boston.

For all permitted work, contractors are required to have a COVID-19 safety plan that is tailored to each jobsite and spells out practices for protecting worker safety. Contractors must also submit a signed affidavit to the city swearing that such plans are in place and will be implemented.

Safety plans must address at least six key points:

- 1) Steps taken before shifts start to ensure worker safety, such as screening for symptoms
- 2) Practices to ensure social distancing on the jobsite
- 3) Materials provided to ensure job site hygiene, such as access to hot water or hand sanitizer stations and a sufficient number of clean restrooms

- 4) Protocols for the use of personal protective equipment like masks, gloves and shields
- 5) Communication and safety practices such as signage and COVID-19 specific safety meetings to ensure that everyone on the site is informed
- 6) Procedures in case there is exposure to COVID-19 at the jobsite

Contractors will need to be patient and work cooperatively as we engage with state and local government leaders to determine exactly what the new normal will be.

To say the last few weeks have been difficult would be an understatement. But as we begin to reopen, we should keep in mind the twin goals of keeping our employees safe and preventing further outbreaks that would lead to yet another shutdown. Please continue to take advantage of the resources ABC is making available to help all of our members. We continue to regularly update our COVID-19 Resource Page on the ABC website. The website also has ABC's full contact information and if we can be of help, please let us know.

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