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## **Keeping Rhode Islanders safely at work during COVID-19 - by Steven King**

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Quonset Business Park continues to be a bustling hub of activity, despite the challenging economic realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the leading engine of economic development and job creation in Rhode Island with 12,000 workers at over 200 companies, the Quonset Development Corp. (QDC) team has worked hard and smart to position the Quonset Business Park to be among the industry leaders of a post-pandemic economy.

According to a 2019 report from Bryant University, the Business Park generates \$1.28 billion in annual income for Rhode Island families while the average wage for Quonset Business Park workers is 19% higher than the state average. There are thousands of hard working people whose families rely on their employment at the park, and at Quonset supported businesses. A renewed focus on infrastructure upgrades has created a place where thousands of people from all around the state can thrive.

One of the crown jewels of Quonset, the Port of Davisville, has seen an essential upgrade move nearly to completion over the past few months. In 2016, the voters of Rhode Island approved a \$50 million bond measure to fund the rehabilitation of Pier 2, the workhorse of Davisville. Built in 1956 and designed to last 50 years, Pier 2 handles all of the incoming heavy cargo imports; automobiles, wind turbine components, electric transformers, and other cargo. This rehabilitation project will extend the life of the Pier at Rhode Island's only public port until 2072.

Dozens of construction workers have worked simultaneously on three separate pieces of the Pier 2 rehabilitation project:

- Replacing the bulkheads on the east and north faces of Pier 2. This project has been completed with a punch list of items being addressed this summer;
- Extending Pier 2 by 232 feet, allowing a third berthing space at the port for unloading cars and other cargo. This project is substantially complete, and;

- Dredging the Narragansett Bay to -33 feet to accommodate the large cargo ships that are a staple at the Port of Davisville. This element was completed earlier this year.

The continued work on the Pier 2 rehabilitation project will ensure that Rhode Island will emerge from the pandemic among the leaders in offshore wind logistics and staging on the East Coast, while continuing to expand the auto import business.

A second construction project is moving forward at Electric Boat, Quonset's largest company. Electric Boat is in the midst of a \$792 million expansion of its submarine building capabilities, creating thousands of jobs over the next decade. To prepare for the influx of work, Quonset has advanced on a number of site preparation projects in recent months.

Our contractors have nearly completed infrastructure improvements on all the roadways around Electric Boat's growing campus of buildings. This work includes the installation of a new water transmission main, gravity sewer, National Grid gas main and installation of new concrete curbs, sidewalks, wheelchair ramps and driveways. Ongoing progress is being made on Electric Boat buildings 9B and 10A, which will house submarine component construction. QDC looks forward to Phase 2 of the Electric Boat expansion starting soon.

Meanwhile, with the support of our state's Congressional delegation, QDC has advanced on multiple federal and state grant funded projects across the park:

QDC was awarded a nearly \$500,000 Federal Transit Administration grant to work with RI Fast Ferry to construct a new bulkhead for their pier. The project is expected to be completed this month.

QDC has been awarded a \$3 million grant from the Federal Railroad Administration for improvements to the Mill Creek Railyard, with a Request for Proposal for engineering design going out to bid shortly.

QDC most recently received a \$450,000 grant from our partners at the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management for resiliency upgrades to Quonset's award-winning Wastewater facility. The funding will support the purchase of equipment that would increase the redundancy of the system as well as the relining of an aging sewer truck line that has flooded during large storms.

Our partners in federal and state government have been key to making these infrastructure projects possible, and for continuing the momentum at Quonset.

Quonset Business Park is a major source of jobs, tax revenue and economic development in Rhode Island. The QDC has worked around the clock to advance essential projects that keep Rhode Islanders at work and keep them safe throughout. With this continued momentum, Quonset Business Park will continue to provide unique opportunities for Rhode Islanders and businesses who make their home at the Park.

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