



Construction Health & Safety: COVID-19 Protocols Keep Projects Moving

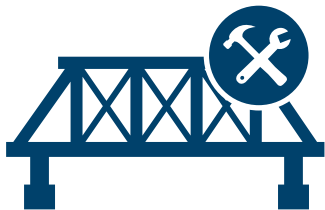
Keeping workers safe on construction sites and in the field is always top of mind, and more so during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is impacting sectors across the AEC industry, creating risk and schedule delay to a significant number of projects. Currently, construction is continuing on critical infrastructure improvements deemed essential, primarily in the transportation and energy markets.

However, if sites and workers do not observe social distancing and more aggressive safety protocols, those projects risk fines—or complete work stoppage.

To avoid delays and keep projects moving safely, some states are taking new, proactive measures, requiring consultants, contractors, and vendors to update Health and Safety procedures to include COVID-19 protocols before allowing projects to continue.

Updating Health and Safety procedures will not only allow for important infrastructure improvements to continue, it will help keep the economy moving forward and prepare us for the future—while keeping our colleagues and communities safe during completion of work.

Maintaining Health & Safety in the Field During COVID-19



Preserves critical infrastructure



Keeps the economy moving



Protects industry workers



Preserve Critical Infrastructure

Now more than ever, the state of our infrastructure is critical to allow mobility for emergency vehicles, floating hospitals, and deliveries—not only of food and critical supplies for daily life, but also desperately needed medical equipment. There is also strong potential, and voiced intent from clients, to accelerate project work during current reduced asset usage in an effort to maximize efficiency of construction efforts. With minimal traffic on our roads, in our airports, and on our transit and rail facilities, as well as many higher education facilities closed, this is a time that construction can proceed without interruption or stoppages.

Many projects and programs are proceeding in accordance with their original schedules; however, if safety protocols are not observed, work delays will follow. **Updating Health and Safety procedures will allow Departments of Transportation, transit agencies, airports, and municipalities to keep projects moving and for our infrastructure to maintain a state of good repair.**



Keep the Economy Moving

Proactively incorporating Health and Safety expectations and procedures minimizes the risk of projects shutting down during this pandemic. And, with projects moving forward and avoiding delay, our workforce can also move forward, helping the overall economy during a time when many sectors are shut down. It's hard to imagine what life will look like after COVID-19, but this will not last forever. Engineers, architects, and contractors are considered essential employees, both during COVID-19 and after. Our industry, and the projects we are advancing now and in the future, helps to keep our economy moving.



Daily checklist development



Application development



Plan and policy reviews



Site compliance checks

Best Practices

Incorporating Health & Safety Updates to Projects

VHB is partnering with clients to develop proactive COVID-19 health and safety measures for consultants and contractors on current and future projects. We are sharing best practices and helping to develop recommendations—from implementing policies and procedures in alignment with COVID-19 guidelines, to conducting expeditious reviews and compliance checks. These updates will allow projects to advance, our workers to remain safe, and the economy to move forward.

Best Practices

Protecting Our Industry Workers

Construction continues in many locations for projects local authorities define as essential work, particularly in the transportation and energy markets. Residential and industrial developers are also forging ahead, as is essential field work, such as natural resource assessments, site walks, and construction monitoring. During these activities, it is important for surveyors, contractors, scientists, and other field workers to protect themselves and others by following these precautions:

- » Bring all required PPE, food, water, and other supplies you need from home; assume stores are not open.
- » When work can be safely conducted by one person, do so. Maintain a communication plan when working alone.
- » Ask field crews (preferably two people) to develop a plan for partnering on every project to minimize interaction and potentially spreading infection.
- » Assign equipment to each field crew member for the duration.
- » Travel to sites in separate vehicles to maintain social distancing while commuting.
- » Implement a sanitation and disinfecting procedure for any shared equipment, including company vehicles.
- » Wear gloves or wash hands when refueling vehicles.
- » Stay home for a minimum of 14 days if exhibiting typical COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath).
- » Continue to implement regular safety precautions in addition to COVID-19 protocols.

How VHB Can Help

The health and safety of employees, our clients, and consultant partners has always been our #1 priority, and it will continue to be during this uncertain time as we diligently monitor the COVID-19 situation and its impacts to our communities and workplace. VHB is following the OSHA and CDC guidelines for businesses, and we have established guidance and protocols to make certain that all work, including on site and in the field, is completed in a safe manner.

Have you been tasked with updating your guidance, procedures, and Health and Safety Plan to include COVID-19 protocols? Do you need help understanding your state's guidelines and requirements? We're here to help support active construction efforts and keep your projects moving. Please reach out to **Susan Nichols, ENV SP**, for assistance at snichols@vhb.com.