



March 19, 2020

The Honorable Kate Brown
Governor of the State of Oregon
900 Court Street NE, Suite 254
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: DHS Guidance on Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of our members and their employees in the wood products industry in Oregon, we are writing to urge the State of Oregon to adopt policies consistent with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Recovery Agency's *Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response* dated March 19, 2020. This guidance states:

"If you work in a critical infrastructure industry, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security, such as healthcare services and pharmaceutical and food supply, you have a special responsibility to maintain your normal work schedule."

The national guidance specifically identifies, **"Workers who support the manufacture and distribution of forest products, including, but not limited to timber, paper, and other wood products"** as part of the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce.

We appreciate the considerable challenges our elected officials, administrators, and others are facing in making decisions aimed at protecting communities and workers across the country. We stand ready in this unprecedented situation to work with state, federal, and local officials to protect public health while also working to safeguard critical supply chains and cushion economic effects on vulnerable Oregon workers.

The American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) is a regional trade association whose purpose is to advocate for sustained-yield timber harvests on public timberlands throughout the West to enhance forest health and resistance to fire, insects, and disease. AFRC promotes active management to attain productive public forests, protect the value and integrity of adjoining private forests, and assure community stability. It works to improve federal and state laws, regulations, policies and decisions regarding access to and management of public forest lands and protection of all forest lands. AFRC represents over 60 forest product businesses and forest

landowners throughout Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, and Montana. These businesses provide tens of thousands of family-wage jobs in rural communities.

In Oregon our industry employs over 60,000 workers.¹ Oregon is the leading producer of lumber and plywood in the nation and is a leader in engineered wood products.² Because forest products businesses tend to be located in rural areas, our industry provides some of the highest wages in counties with economic challenges, including Clatsop, Lincoln, and Harney Counties among others.³

The forest products industry plays an important role in critical infrastructure in North America in many ways, including:

- Wood building products are the principal building material used across a myriad of infrastructure projects, including emergency medical and lodging structures, and temporary buildings, as well as timely refurbishing or repurposing of existing facilities for immediate use. As an example, there are established design guidelines for modest buildings up to 16' x 24' in size that can be constructed within 24 hours and withstand both high winds and seismic forces. These are not “temporary” buildings but rather can be erected quickly for immediate use. These designs were shared with emergency responders for use following the natural disasters in Haiti and Puerto Rico, among other places.
- Residuals from wood products manufacturers are used extensively by pulp and paper mills, which are then used in tissue, personal hygiene and packaging products – critically-needed products during this crisis.
- Wood products manufacturing facilities provide needed materials for construction supply lines.
- Many wood product manufacturers generate electricity for the public utility grid using carbon neutral biomass.
- Moreover, our mills are constructed and operate in a way that supports social distancing, and stringent safety procedures are already the norm.
- Wood products facilities are frequently located in rural communities and provide family-wage jobs that are otherwise in very short supply in those areas. Maintaining employment at wood products facilities through this crisis is essential to prevent disastrous effects on rural economies.

As state policy leaders navigate these challenging times and consider measures to protect the public, we respectfully request that you strongly consider and adopt the Department of Homeland Security’s national guidelines for Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers – which include the wood products industry – to protect and support critical supply chains, workers, communities, and Oregon businesses.

¹ Oregon Forest Res. Inst., *Oregon Forest Facts 2019-20*, at 22.

² *Oregon Forest Facts*, pp. 8-10.

³ *Oregon Forest Facts*, p. 6.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Travis Joseph", with a stylized, cursive script.

Travis Joseph
President/CEO
American Forest Resource Council