The health and safety of ACEC Missouri's employees and members is at the forefront of our policies and guidelines, and as such, we are continuously addressing the coronavirus outbreak. In accordance with government guidelines to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, we are working in the office on Mondays but are working remotely Tuesday-Friday. We will reassess as the situation develops. There is an abundance of COVID-19 information on the ACEC and ACEC/MO websites and they are updated daily. If you have any questions, please email Bruce Wylie or Dawn Hill.

Paycheck Protection Program Guidance Under CARES Act

After a White House press conference yesterday, a new guidance has been posted to the Federal Register to implement the new loans for businesses with 500 employees or less under the Paycheck Protection Program. The Paycheck Protection Program prioritizes millions of Americans employed by small businesses by authorizing up to $349 billion toward job retention and certain other expenses. Small businesses and eligible nonprofit organizations, Veterans organizations, and Tribal businesses described in the Small Business Act, as well as individuals who are self-employed or are independent contractors,
are eligible if they also meet program size standards. *In the case of engineering firms, firms with fewer than 500 employees would qualify.*

- Top-Line Overview of the Program
- Lender information
- Borrower information
- Borrower Application Form
- Lender Electronic Data Form
- Paycheck Protection Program - Interim Final Rule

Paycheck Protection Program Resources:
- SBA Paycheck Protection Program
- Department of the Treasury CARES Act

We urge firms that might qualify for this new assistance to contact your lenders and CPAs for additional information and guidance.

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**Tools to Weather the COVID-19 Storm**

As we all begin to settle into the “new normal” routine of social distancing and remote work, we are repeatedly amazed at how resilient our industry is to disruptions such as the one we find ourselves in. We know our members are working day and night to ensure their businesses remain intact through this crisis. There is no question that our industry is essential at a time like this, and it’s our job to give you the tools you need to weather the storm and come out stronger for it. Here is what’s happening at ACEC this week:

**Advocacy:**
ACEC’s advocacy department is working hard to distribute guidance from federal agencies responsible for implementing coronavirus response legislation. Today, the IRS released guidance on the payroll tax credits connected to Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) emergency paid leave, and made available Form 7200 for advance payment of these tax credits. This information and more has been posted to ACEC’s Resource page.

**Online Resources:**
In the coming days, ACEC will be revamping their Coronavirus Resource Page to make it more user friendly. If you haven’t visited the page, we encourage you to do so as it contains a significant amount of information on federal programs aimed at assisting small businesses as part of the CARES Act.

**Free Webinars:**
ACEC is continuing to host free webinars, which have been very popular with our members. On April 7th ACEC will host a webinar on “You’re Not Alone: Tools for Living and Working in Uncertain Times” from 10:30-11:30 AM. Again, registration for this webinar is free and can be accessed on-demand if you can’t make the live presentation.

**Communications:**
Finally, ACEC has begun a new series of coronavirus related interviews through their Engineering Influence podcast program. We invite you to listen to our own Steve Hall review the CARES Act, and Sage Policy Group’s Anirban Basu discuss the macroeconomic outlook for the nation. They are also continuing to post on ACEC’s Last Word. If you haven’t subscribed to the blog, we encourage you to do so here.
Guidance on Payment Assistance from the ACEC Business Insurance Trust

We know controlling expenses while insuring you have the coverage you need is top of mind for every engineering firm as we navigate through this time of crisis. We are pleased to share that The Hartford, the endorsed provider of business insurance for ACEC member firms, is ready to help with policyholder’s individual situations. They have a number of options to assist you including payroll billing and credit card payments. They have also suspended cancellations for non-payment until May 1, 2020 and will not be assessing late fees for premiums due on or before May 1, 2020. If you need assistance, visit http://business.thehartford.com or call The Hartford at (866) 467-8730.

In addition, Greyling Insurance Brokerage & Risk Consulting, a division of EPIC, will work with the carriers providing professional liability insurance to member firms through The ACEC Business Insurance Trust Program, on a case by case basis, to provide payment options for those firms in need of a short-term alternate solution. While we cannot commit to a particular outcome, we will work with you and the insurer to find a resolution. If you need to explore your options, call (833) 223-2248 or email acecbit@greyling.com.

In the meantime, we want you to know that we’re here to help and we understand engineering professional services. Greyling was founded and designed for design professionals and represents over a thousand engineering firms of varying sizes throughout the United States. We are your expert advisors and support team for the difficult questions your firm is facing regarding the impact of the novel coronavirus:

- What recommended actions should my firm be taking at this time?
- What are the implications for my firm if one of our employees contracts COVID-19 during the course of employment?
- How do we navigate the limitations states and local governments are placing on business activity outside of the home?
- What are the risks and considerations if my firm wants to utilize our 3D printing capacity to manufacture needed PPE?
- What is and how do we mitigate our exposure if the firm is unable to meet contractual obligations due to office closures, travel restrictions, and governmental limitations?

We are working to get you the resources you need so you have these answers at hand when you need them. Our team has published a report and brief you can download directly, and EPIC is releasing updates weekly:

- Greyling Report: Insurance Coverage Issues Related to Coronavirus Pandemic
- Greyling Brief: Navigating State Restrictions and Limitations on Business Activity
- EPIC Brokers COVID-19 Resource Center

We know these are uncertain times and events are changing daily. If your firm has insurance and risk related questions, whether you are a current member of the ACEC BIT or not, we encourage you to reach out.

Small Business Owner’s Guide to the CARES Act

The Senate recently released a very detailed guide to the CARES Act that’s an excellent source for small businesses. While much of the information is for programs yet to distribute cash, understanding all your options now will put you in better shape for navigating the coming weeks. To see the Small Business Owner’s Guide, click HERE.
ACEC Offers Free-to-Members COVID-19 Webinar on April 7

ACEC is hosting a free webinar on 'You Are Not Alone: Tools for Living and Working in Uncertain Times'. The webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, April 7, 2020 from 10:30-11:30 AM CST. Personal resilience is a matter of preparation, self-awareness, and the ability to know what you need. Right now, all of us are facing - to varying degrees - radical change and unprecedented uncertainty. Join this crash course in managing our energy, our attention, and our emotions through this tumultuous time. The webinar will be recorded, and access to the recording will be shared on the ACEC Coronavirus Resource Center the day after the webinar takes place. The presenter for the webinar will be Geordie Aitken, Aitken Leadership Group. To register for the webinar, click HERE.

USDA Implements Immediate Measures to Help Those Affected by COVID-19

ACEC has been working with USDA Rural Development to develop a partnering agreement in order to create a better exchange of information, resources and to promote new project opportunities. USDA Rural Development has taken a number of immediate actions to help rural residents, businesses and communities affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Rural Development will keep their customers, partners, and stakeholders continuously updated as more actions are taken to better serve rural America. Read the full announcement to learn more about the opportunities USDA Rural Development is implementing to provide immediate relief to our customers, partners, and stakeholders. Below is more information from USDA related to COVID-19.

- USDA Fact Sheet
- USDA Program Directors
- USDA Rural Development State & National Office Engineers
- USDA Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program

On Engineering Influence Podcast, Economist Anirban Basu Talks About the Economy and COVID-19

Anirban Basu, president and CEO of Sage Policy Group, came on the Engineering Influence podcast to give his outlook on the economy in light of the coronavirus. To the Click HERE to listen to the full podcast.

Covering Coronavirus: Risk Management & Employee Benefits Considerations

EPIC Insurance Brokers & Consultants take a focused look at how coronavirus is impacting the transportation industry, including how to keep truckers rolling, and recent DOL decisions. They also consider how pressure from lawmakers may impact the outcomes of Business Interruption claims and provide updates on the CARES Act, as well as wellness and employee benefits insights.
ACEC Member Survey: Firms Continue to Buckle Down, See Slow Recovery

In the latest ACEC Member Survey, more firms report stepping up their efforts to keep operating while protecting their staff members and see continued tough times ahead. In the survey, conducted March 31 to April 1, 610 firms participated. Of these, 31 percent employ 10 staff or fewer, and 71 percent employ 50 or fewer. Key highlights include:

- Compared with 30 days ago, 58 percent report that their cash flow situation is worse, and 54 percent report that their finances are worse. Among small firms, 64 percent say their cash flow is worse.
- Eight in ten believe the economy will get worse over the next 30 days. As a result, 72 percent believe their cash flow situation will worsen and 68 percent anticipate a decline in their financial situation.
- Almost half of respondents think the economy will improve in six months, but one in four expect it to get worse.
- To preserve cash, 29 percent of respondents have instituted a hiring freeze and 29 percent have put a stop to all non-essential purchases.
- To protect their staff, nine out of ten firms are using virtual work and social distancing. More firms are relying on emergency paid leave (34 percent) than on emergency unpaid leave (9 percent).
- Seven in ten firms report project delays or cancellations and 45 percent say that RFP/RFQs have been delayed.
- Most respondents (72 percent) have not received credit assistance or do not need it.
- More than half (51 percent) expect the recent federal stimulus plan to have a positive impact, while just 3 percent think the impact will be negative.

Click HERE to view the complete survey.

Governor Parson Gives Updates on Missouri National Guard, DED, DOC & DNR Efforts to Assist with COVID-19 Response

Governor Mike Parson provided updates on efforts by the Missouri National Guard, Missouri Department of Economic Development (DED), Missouri Department of Corrections (DOC), and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to assist with the state’s COVID-19 response. Governor Parson was joined by Missouri Department of Public Safety Director Sandy Karsten, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) Director Dr. Randall Williams, DED Director Rob Dixon, DOC Director Anne Precythe, and DNR Director Carol Comer.
MO National Guard Assists with Efforts to Identify Potential Alternate Care Sites
Since Governor Parson’s signing of Executive Order 20-06 last week, the Missouri National Guard has been working as part of the state’s effort to identify potential alternate care sites, if needed, around Missouri. Along with the Guard, the agencies involved in these site surveys are DHSS, the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the Missouri Office of Administration, the Missouri Hospital Association, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. While nothing has been confirmed, there are several possible sites.

Department of Economic Development and Missouri Businesses Answer Call to Help During COVID-19 Crisis
DED has been actively reaching out to business leaders across the state to see how they can assist during this challenging time. Last week, DED, SEMA, DHSS, and the Office of Administration partnered with the Cole County Commission and Missouri Association of Councils of Government to purchase 125 ventilators with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. $2.8 million in CDBG funding will be used for the purchase and distribution of the ventilators. Several Missouri companies have also responded to the call to help procure or produce Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for health care workers. There are also a number of breweries and distilleries that have shifted production or provided materials to produce hand sanitizer for health care workers, nursing homes, first responders and non-profits. DED is continuing to work with manufacturers to procure and produce additional PPE and other medical equipment.

Missouri State Parks Modifies Operations to Address Overcrowding
Out of an abundance of caution and in response to recent events, Missouri State Parks will modify operations at five state parks to address overcrowding and concerns regarding COVID-19 and public safety. The modifications, including the temporary closure of four of Missouri’s state parks and partial closure of one additional park, will take effect at 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 2 and are scheduled to continue until April 30. The new measures will further implement the latest recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. DNR and the Missouri State Parks team are closely monitoring the progression of COVID-19 and its effects in Missouri. While safety, stewardship and service are all very important to Missouri State Parks, safety remains the top priority.

Department of Corrections Works to Prevent Spread of COVID-19
DOC is working to keep COVID-19 of prisons and are prepared to contain it should it come in. Preparation for communicable diseases is not new for DOC – the Department has always had plans and procedures in place and has enhanced them for COVID-19. Missouri Vocational Enterprises, which operates 22 industries inside state prisons, has also modified operations to help communities during the COVID-19 crisis. Currently, there are no cases of COVID-19 inside any Missouri Department of Corrections facility. One offender who already was hospitalized tested positive for COVID-19. He has since tested negative for the virus twice but remains hospitalized while being treated for other medical conditions.

To view the complete press release, click HERE. All pictures from the briefing are also available on Governor Parson’s Flickr page.