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US Dept of Homeland Security Issues Updates for Identifying Essential Workers

By Mark Conroy

On November 16, 2018, President Trump signed into law an Act that created the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), which is now part of the US Dept of Homeland Security (DHS). Of importance to our industry is the agency's development of Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce: Ensuring Community and National Resilience in COVID-19 Response. The latest edition issued March 28, 2020 contains some good news for our industry and updated direction for state and local governments.

Identifying Essential Workers

The DHS guidance contains an extensive list of essential critical infrastructure workers. Within the list is the following bullet item:

- **“Workers providing electronic security, fire, monitoring and life safety services, and to ensure physical security, cleanliness and safety of facilities and personnel, including temporary licensing waivers for security personnel to work in other States of Municipalities”.**

The Importance of Essential Workers

DHS says the following in their guidance document **“Functioning critical infrastructure is imperative during the response to the COVID-19 emergency for both public health and safety as well as community well-being. Certain critical infrastructure industries have a special responsibility in these times to continue operations”.**

Essential Workers Continue During Closure Orders

DHS continues by saying **“Promoting the ability of such workers to continue to work during periods of community restriction, access management, social distancing, or closure orders/directives is crucial to community resilience and continuity of essential functions”.**

FED Technicians

It is now clear that Fire Equipment Distributor (FED) technicians are essential critical infrastructure workers. According to the DHS guidance, you have a special responsibility to maintain a work schedule that supports safety in your community. You also have a responsibility to make sure you and your family not exposed to undue risk. Employers should provide soaps, sanitizers, and disposable towels.

Information to Avoid Spreading the Virus

Good sanitation is one of the best methods to avoid spreading the virus. Here are the basics.

- Wash hands frequently and use hand sanitizer
- Clean and disinfect doorknobs, faucets, handrails, tables, keyboards, etc. frequently
- Clean surfaces including work vans and trucks with normal cleaning products
- Wear gloves as a reminder not to touch your face and prevent contact with surfaces
- Clean hands after removing gloves

Although the FED technician performs critically important life safety and property protection measures during the COVID-19 crisis, steps should be taken by technicians to avoid catching or spreading the virus. We are all in this together. Let's work together to keep our communities safe and help contain the virus.

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