
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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NCSL COVID-19 WEBINAR — CRITICAL ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Webinar. On April 7, 2020, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) hosted a [webinar](#) centered around how the energy sector is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and federal and state actions regarding energy needs during the public health emergency.

Department of Energy Response. The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response underscored the importance of energy workers as an essential piece of the critical infrastructure workforce and detailed support measures for energy workers, including a need for personal protective equipment while providing energy services. Some measures currently being used for the sequestration of essential critical infrastructure workers include:

- Conducting workforce analysis to determine the minimum number of essential workers necessary to ensure uninterrupted operations.
- Requiring all employees to wear personal protective equipment during shifts.
- Organizing units of workers to share the same shift and avoid exposure to other personnel.
- Testing workers for COVID-19 prior to sequestration.
- Thoroughly sanitizing work areas at each shift change and sanitizing frequently touched areas regularly during the shift.
- Implementing entry wellness questionnaires and temperature checks at regular intervals throughout the shift.

Information on how states can access waivers for regulatory barriers encountered during attempts to respond to the pandemic can be found [here](#). Guidance for the energy sector during the pandemic and responses to frequently asked questions are posted weekly on the Office's COVID-19 [webpage](#).

Energy Emergency Assurance Coordinator Program. A SharePoint site has been established for state and territory energy offices, governors' energy advisors, public utilities commission staff, emergency managers, and homeland security agencies to share information, ask questions, and connect with the Department of Energy regarding state and territory concerns related to COVID-19.

Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council. The Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council has released updated [guidance](#) for public utilities responding to COVID-19. This guidance includes potential and confirmed exposure considerations when accessing homes, buildings, restricted areas, and government and military facilities, and decision-making tools for ensuring grid reliability and responding to grid disruptions during emergencies.

State Actions and Policy Options. During the webinar, immediate concerns for the energy industry (electricity, natural gas, and petroleum) during the pandemic were presented. These immediate concerns included:

- Defining the essential workforce, including critical manufacturing and supply chain businesses and workers.
- Providing exemptions from quarantines, curfews, and travel restrictions to move critical personnel between jurisdictions with an identified level of need.
- Prioritized testing and access to personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies for essential workers.
- Regulatory relief and waivers for fuel carrier standards.

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act Funding. The federal [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act](#) made \$150.000 billion available for state, local, and tribal government relief. Iowa received the minimum allocation of \$1.250 billion. Additionally, Iowa is estimated to receive \$0.6 million under the federal Manufacturing Extension Partnership from the U.S. Department of Commerce and \$1.3 million in Emergency Performance Management Grant funds from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The Act appropriated \$900.0 million for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program and \$127.5 million to the U.S. Department of Energy for COVID-19 research, preparation, and response efforts.

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