March 24, 2020

To: PMA Wisconsin Members

On Tuesday, March 24, 2020, Gov. Tony Evers directed the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to issue a “Safer at Home” order to cease all non-essential business statewide. The order limits gatherings and asks Wisconsin residents to refrain from leaving their homes except for essential needs and to work at essential businesses. The order will take effect Wednesday, March 25, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. and is set to last through 8:00 a.m. on Friday, April 24, 2020.

The order follows similar actions by numerous other states such as California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

After working with the White House last week to develop a set of national guidelines, PMA’s team in Washington, D.C. succeeded in lobbying to have Wisconsin and several other states adopt a federal definition of Critical Manufacturing for those businesses permitted to continue operations.

Page 9 of the Wisconsin order specifically identifies the U.S. Department of Homeland Security CISA list on which PMA lobbied as the accepted definition for an essential critical infrastructure employee. More importantly, page 13, subsection r, of the order specifically includes “Supplies for Essential Businesses and Operations and Essential Government Functions. Businesses that sell, manufacture, or supply other Essential Businesses and Operations...”

That federal DHS definition on which PMA lobbied to help establish includes “medical supply chains, and for supply chains associated with transportation, energy, communications, food and agriculture, chemical manufacturing, nuclear facilities, the operation of dams, water and wastewater treatment, emergency services, and the defense industrial base. Additionally, workers needed to maintain the continuity of these manufacturing functions and associated supply chains” (see Critical Manufacturing page 10). Defense subcontractors are also included (see Defense Industrial Base page 11).

If a business is unsure about whether they are exempted from the order, they are asked to review the guidance provided by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). If, after having reviewing the WEDC materials, a business still believes it does not fall within the meaning of Essential Businesses and Operations, it may apply for designation as such by submitting this form to the WEDC.

To assist small businesses adversely economically impacted by COVID-19, Wisconsin is offering grants to existing loan clients of Wisconsin-based Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) through the Small Business 20/20 Program. Grants can be used to cover rent payments, payroll and paid leave for employees. The state has also been approved by the Small Business Administration (SBA) for companies seeking disaster loans for up to $2 million.
In Washington, D.C., our lobbyists indicate that the U.S. Senate is hoping to vote on a final package in the coming days, though a U.S. Senator has now tested positive for COVID-19 with several others under self-quarantine.

The measure on which PMA is lobbying could include $350 billion for small businesses, those defined as having fewer than 500 employees. This proposal includes allowing eligible companies to receive zero interest "business interruption loans" to pay employees, rent or mortgages that are backed by the SBA, with loan forgiveness contingent on keeping workers on the payroll. The draft bill also includes an expansion of Net Operating Loss and several other provisions requested by the association.

Following conversations with members and a survey of companies last week, our team in Washington, D.C. submitted to the White House and Congress a list of 10 recommendations to support manufacturers during the COVID-19 economic recovery process, several of which are included in the pending measure. The recommendations include solutions to help with cash flow, prompt payment terms to suppliers for companies receiving federal funds, ensuring banks do not revoke existing lines of credit, and making sure manufacturers have the resources to continue operations and quickly ramp up production after the crisis wanes.

The situation is very fluid and, while PMA is a national organization, we are mobilizing all of our resources to assist our members throughout the country. Working with our advocacy team in Washington, D.C., we have created www.onevoiceinfo.org as a one-stop resource for members to find links to the latest OSHA, CDC and local government resources, including workplace safety posters to print.

Please feel free to reach out to us at any time with questions.