

To: NASEO Building Committee participants  
From: Ed Carley, Program Director, Buildings  
RE: Updates from the May Building Committee call

Thank you to all of the participants in the May Building Committee Call. Several participants requested a copy of the Dodge Data Analytics Slides. They can be found here: <https://www.linkedin.com/smart-links/AQHEaiHrH5RwvQ>. Please be advised that you will be asked to provide your name and email to access the slides.

On the Building Committee call at the beginning of May we heard from a number of State Energy Offices and affiliate members about the impacts of COVID-19 on energy efficiency programs and businesses. More details are provided below, but the major takeaways from the call were that the pandemic has resulted in:

- Major impacts on residential energy efficiency programs
- Impacts on commercial projects that are not as severe, but include unexpected challenges. For example, shifting occupancy in commercial buildings leading to data collection work stoppage, as the data collected with very low occupancy is not valid
- Some jurisdictions have taken the opportunity to accelerate construction in schools which are now unoccupied.
- Many State Energy Offices have created stakeholder advisory groups composed of energy industry representatives in their state to provide direct feedback and collaboration with energy offices for the initial response and to plan for recovery.
- State Energy Offices have extended grant deadlines and accelerated payment for completed work whenever possible.
- Remote or virtual inspections of projects via video conference for code inspection, residential and commercial energy audits, and for project acceptance have been increasingly deployed by state and local jurisdictions.
- Many State Energy Offices and affiliates are attempting to identify projects that could be “shovel ready” should a federal stimulus spending package emerge.

**Residential energy efficiency:** For obvious reasons, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an outsized impact on the residential energy efficiency industry. With most people sheltering at home, many states and utilities have suspended residential energy efficiency programs indefinitely. In order to keep these workers and businesses engaged, several states and affiliates have seen increased interest in workforce training for residential efficiency contractors who may be furloughed.

Despite the disruption in the ability for contractors to access homes, there is still interest in and need for energy efficiency programs. Residential energy consumption has increased on both weekday and weekend days. Big box stores such as Home Depot and Lowes are largely considered essential services, and energy efficiency products are still available for purchase. Residential energy efficiency messaging from utilities and other stakeholders is still valuable at this time, as residents seek out reliable information on ways to reduce energy consumption.

**Publicly owned buildings, commercial buildings and industrial efficiency:** The impact on commercial and industrial efficiency has been varied across the country. In some states and local jurisdictions, construction activity has been completely halted, while other jurisdictions declared construction (including efficiency retrofits) an essential activity and permitted it to continue. Where permitted, some jurisdictions have reportedly used the opportunity to address deferred maintenance or to speed energy service performance contract funded retrofits in buildings like schools and public facilities. With students and teachers at home, inspections and retrofits have in some instances been sped up, instead of relying on work being completed during relatively short periods of time (e.g. summer vacation for K-12 schools). During the call, several participants encouraged State Energy Offices to work to identify “shovel ready” projects which could be implemented if a federal stimulus funding emerges. Additional recommendations included identifying the projects that required the most labor, and thus create the most jobs. Another recommendation was to consider ways to incorporate technologies which may not fit within utility cost-effectiveness tests while also working to ensure that all programs were complimentary to utility efficiency programs. States and affiliates also mentioned the concept of creating a “project in a box” that could be rolled out quickly with clearly defined participation requirements.

In states and local jurisdictions with shelter in place orders, commercial building energy efficiency projects have been impacted even when the work could continue. An example is commissioning of commercial buildings. Where data is being collected, it is not representative of normal use patterns because of extremely low occupancy, resulting in delayed or halted projects. LEED Certification work is also reportedly at a standstill. There is also a great deal of interest in training for commercial efficiency workforce as well.

**Building permitting and code enforcement:** Ryan Colker of the International Code Council (ICC) and the Alliance for National and Community Resilience shared results of an [ICC Survey](#) of 1,200 building officials identifying challenges faced by local building departments. For example, at the time of the survey, 40% of building departments did not have the ability to conduct electronic plan review, 30% did not have the capability for electronic building permitting, 23% of building department employees lacked access to code books, and 60% could not conduct remote inspections. The ICC has developed [resources to support building departments](#) that lack remote inspection capabilities and has also created guidance for building departments as they work to reopen their own offices.

**State Energy Office operated grant programs:** At least one state has extended a blanket grant extension to all active grantees, extending end dates to January 5, 2021, with longer extension available on a case-by-case basis to be re-evaluated in Fall 2020. Grantees are also being allowed to “test out” or demonstrate project completion via “virtual” video inspections. Grantees are also being allowed to push deeper into their indirect and administrative costs to respond to project changes as a result of the pandemic.

**NASEO COVID-19 Resource hub:** <https://naseo.org/covid-19>

**State resources:**

Utah's resource page: [Coronavirus.utah.gov](https://coronavirus.utah.gov)

Maryland's resource page: <https://energy.maryland.gov/Pages/MEA-COVID-19-Updates.aspx>

**Other resources:**

Building Performance Association: <https://www.building-performance.org/coronavirus>

International Code Council: <https://www.iccsafe.org/advocacy/coronavirus-response-center/>