

COVID-19 in the Construction Sector

Subjects: [Health Care Sciences & Services](#)

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This section analyzes the influence of COVID-19 in the construction sector. Construction workers' high vulnerability to the spread of the virus motivated this entry. The construction sector's peculiarities and some work procedure characteristics in this sector make telecommuting impossible in most activities. In addition, most of the states and national governments declared the construction sector essential activity due to its high economic impact. The working conditions in this sector are very special: constant trips to work in groups, work group execution with little interpersonal distance, group travel, stays and accommodations away from home, meals in restaurants or work canteens, lunch in restaurants or work canteens, etc. Due to all of this, the contagion rate was very high during the pandemic months. Even today, it is still considered one of the most dangerous sectors for these purposes. With all this in mind, here we discuss why it is difficult to minimize the spread of the virus for construction workers, summarize how to assess exposure risk grades for construction job tasks, and provide possible protection requirements for the different exposure risk grades.

COVID-19

construction sector

building work

The year 2020 changed humanity. In March 2020, a global pandemic was declared due to the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. This virus produces the disease known as COVID-19 ^[1]. Since the pandemic's declaration, the virus has kept the entire world on edge, with borders closed for many months and millions of citizens confined at home.

COVID-19 infections have proliferated very quickly around the world. During the first few months, governments made extraordinary decisions to limit the virus spread and prevent health systems collapsing.

Two years later, scientists still have some confusion about the virus's mechanism operation and its effect on the human body. However, everybody knows this virus is highly contagious and its effects can be very harmful and even deadly.

The construction sector's activity includes all types of building (residential and non-residential) construction, rehabilitation, maintenance, and demolition. It includes civil engineering works also, such as roads, railways, or pipeline transport execution, all their complementary works (such as bridges or tunnels), and the rest of public service system execution ^[2].

Several market groups are involved in the construction sector, such as architectural and engineering design, materials and equipment production, transportation, or energy and waste management, to name just a few. Construction creates value thanks to the transformation of basic raw materials into capital goods, which are essential for economic activity and the provision of infrastructure services ^[2]. Its labor and economic importance is unquestionable.

Therefore, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (an agency from the United States Department of Labor) includes within the sector, in addition to employers and construction workers, those engaged in carpentry, ironworking, plumbing, electrical, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, masonry and concrete work, utility construction work, and earthmoving activities ^[3].

Construction sector activity can have a great impact on generating economic income and reducing poverty. Its potential to create employment is considerable due to its labor-intensive nature and its links with many other economic sectors as well.

Before the pandemic, the construction sector represented about 7.7% of global employment ^[4]. Forecasts for 2020 were that construction would contribute 13.4% of the global GDP, but the COVID-19 crisis changed everything ^[5].

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