

Oregon Landscape

1st Quarter, 2020



Oregon's Landscape Professionals



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President's Message

Jeremy Tobin, Aspen Creek Landscaping

The delicate balance of social responsibility, public health and economic sustainability has been thrust upon the shoulders of small businesses throughout this nation. The outbreak of COVID-19 and the uncertainty it has brought forth forces us to try to answer some very difficult questions. Do we stay open so our employees can continue to get a paycheck? Will our clients want or need our service during this outbreak so we can continue to have an operating budget? How long can we afford to keep the lights on if we are forced to stop doing business? Will the state or federal government provide our employees with a safety net so food can continue to be on the table? Will the government programs just put into place help small businesses bridge the gap? How long will it take for the economy to recover after this is all over? When will this be over? We are all faced to ask ourselves these questions on a daily basis. Confusion, exhaustion, resolve, anger, sadness are just a few emotions constantly racing through our minds. We have all dealt with times of economic uncertainty, but never like this.

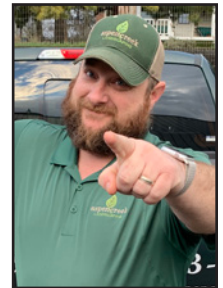
On March 23, Governor Kate Brown issued a Stay Home Executive Order to reduce the spread of coronavirus in Oregon. This new policy orders Oregonians to stay in their homes whenever possible and includes stronger language around approved activities and business activities. The order is modeled after the edicts of other states and cities, though is not quite as sweeping in terms of the businesses that will be required to close. The order includes

a number of exceptions for businesses and other services that are deemed essential - including landscaping.

Construction, manufacturing, landscaping and other essential businesses may continue so long as they "ensure that their employees are maintaining social distancing measures." So long as your landscaping business can maintain the six-foot distance from others required at their places of work and the work sites in the field, they are permitted to continue to operate. Transportation to and from work sites require this same distancing so employees might have to drive in separate vehicles or provide their own vehicle for transport to and from the work site.

Those who defy the order can be charged with endangering public health, a Class C misdemeanor. People found to have violated the order could be jailed for up to 30 days or fined \$1,250. The order does not directly address travel, hotels or vacation homes and rentals. We know these are trying and uncertain times for all of us. We have been diligently working with State and Local authorities to ensure that our businesses can safely operate during potential stay at home orders.

The most important thing we can do as an organization is to support each other. We are stronger together, we might compete for employees and clients, but the viability of our industry depends upon our unity.



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Operating and Communicating with Customers During the Quarantine

Reprinted from the National Association of Landscape Professionals

To say the current situation is unusual and difficult is not an overstatement. The COVID-19 crisis is evolving daily and industry companies are adapting their operations to protect and serve their staff – and client needs.

“We have spent a tremendous amount of time over the past two weeks evaluating the recommendations to keep our employees and the general public safe and have been modifying and training our employees continually to follow these new work rules,”



says Bob Grover, president of Pacific Landscape Management, in Hillsboro, Oregon. “Honestly, it’s been difficult to get people to take this serious especially

early on, but we have been very diligent, and our team is living by the social distancing and sanitation standards.”

Following official recommendations ([see the new industry guidelines](#)) industry companies have put additional measures in place to keep people safe.

Bowen says they educated themselves on the symptoms and the importance of staying away at the first sign of illness weeks ago.

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

OLCA’s State Board has been in constant communication as we see how other states are handling shelter in place orders. Bob Grover, who is also an active member of NALP, has been diligently working on providing our state and local governments’ examples of our industry being essential to Public Health and Well Being. We are hoping that this will allow us to be exempt to work during any potential shelter in place order.

We will continue to work for our industry and will keep you informed as best we can during this time. Remember that we will get through this together but we all need to do our part.

Stay safe and be well.

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QUARANTINE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

“Our installation crews are made up of members of the same house, so they are not being exposed to new people while working with their crew,” Bowen says. “When I visit a site, or when our delivery person is on site, we are careful to maintain a 6’ distance.”



Moore says they’ve been communicating to their employees the need to maintain distancing and to wash their hands on a regular basis along with disinfecting their vehicles and offices multiple times a day. Also, Grassperson’s office staff have all been working remotely.

“We moved away from a manual clock-in process and now the crew texts our operations manager when they get here in the morning and when they leave in the afternoon and so someone remotely actually clocks him in and out,” Moore says. “We’ve got cameras that we can verify when they got here and when they left.”

Moore says three weeks ago, they reduced their crew sizes to 3-man crews and have staggered crew start times as well. He says they’re looking into switching to two-man crews in the next few days.



Regular Client Communication is Key

Landscape and lawn care companies are seeing increased client questions and concerns – with people wanting to know if there are any changes to the services you’ll be providing and what you are doing to ensure the safety of your employees and clients.

“We have been very proactive in communicating with our customers on justification of our status for continuing to work and our procedures to ensure safety of our team and the general public,” Grover says. “This has been met with tremendous appreciation. We’ve learned throughout all that we do, that the more we communicate the more we are appreciated. You don’t get credit when people don’t know what you’re doing so telling them what you’re doing gives you a lot of opportunity to get credit for being a responsible, professional stand-up company.”

Moore says when they started sensing something was going to happen, they communicated to clients at the first of March that they decided to move some of their weekly services to bi-weekly in anticipation of having some team members who won’t be able to work in the near future.

Bowen has been communicating with clients in a number of ways as he continues to work, including maintaining a 6’ plus distance from clients if they meet in person, emailing and teleconferencing.

“Next week I am going to have an initial consultation with a client, they are going to be in their home and on the phone with me while I walk the property,” Bowen says.

Moore says there’s been a small percentage of customers reaching out asking about the situation and majority have been very gracious.

On Grassperson’s website, they’ve included a pop-up on the website that explains they have been considered an essential business. Ross NW Watergardens also has a dedicated coronavirus webpage for visitors with questions. Grover cautions against only posting about COVID-19 on your website as it alone is insufficient when it comes to communication.

One of the challenges right now in communicating with customers is to not be buried amongst the many other emails currently discussing the virus.

“I’m telling them what we’re doing to try to stay ahead and be

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QUARANTINE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

proactive,” Moore says. “But the message really is that we’re going to reduce our service level over the next 30 days proactively in order to try to maintain your property in an acceptable manner, but at the same time, in order to be able to allow us to do all these other things we’re trying to do to keep our employees safe.”

Changes to Service

Bowen says they haven’t scaled back any of their services as of yet, but he’s qualifying leads more thoroughly than ever.

“With many people working from home, it is a great time for them to get a quote for a project – maybe just to find out if they can afford it,” Bowen says. “I am trying to limit my in-person contact to people who are serious about doing their project in the near future.”

Moore says they’ve reduced their number of landscape installation projects due to manpower issues because two-thirds of their H-2B workers have been held at the border as the consular office figures out how to process them during COVID-19.

“We have had a few of our customers suspend service,” Grover says. “Those have been from retail establishments, hotels and restaurants who’ve had to shut their doors. We’ve also had a few customers hold up on pre-approved enhancements. We anticipate that enhancement sales will be the biggest impact as that is oftentimes significantly more discretionary than



the ongoing maintenance. We hope this may be just delays until we get back to normal business operations, but I do believe there will be a reduction in especially enhancement sales this calendar year.”

When to Change Course?

As for whether or not he might consider suspending work, Moore says it would be the moment he feels his employees are in jeopardy. If one crew member became ill, then that crew would be shut down, but if they had multiple people become sick, Moore says they would shut down for 14 days.

Bowen says one scenario where they would consider closing is if their employees were no longer comfortable working as they are not going to pressure them to work.

“It could become socially unacceptable in our area to be

working, even if it is technically allowed,” Bowen says. “We recognize the importance of being good neighbors and don’t want to be causing anxiety to people just over a landscaping project that can certainly wait!”

The other situation would be if landscaping became considered a non-essential business.

“If there is specific clarification that landscaping is not an essential service or barred from working, we would honor the law,” Grover says. “With any vagary that we can justify our operation, we will continue to work. Our reputation with our customers is important and the survival of our employees’ livelihoods is paramount in this decision. There’s no amount of social programs in place that can replace the value of normal.”

Creating an Effective Safety Program

Reprinted from Landscape Industry Essentials – February 26

Evidence shows the number of deaths and injuries – as well as the suffering and financial hardship these events cause for workers and their families – can be significantly reduced when companies adopt safety and health programs. According to federal OSHA, employers also see other benefits, including dramatically reduced workers' compensation claims and costs, improvements in production and quality, better employee morale, improved employee recruiting and retention and a more favorable image and reputation among customers, suppliers and the community.

The tips below can help members of management and crew members work together to develop effective health and safety programs.

Checklist for Supervisors

- **Know what a written safety and health program is.** It is a document that clearly describes all of a company's safety activities, goals, rules, processes and procedures.
 - **Work with your employees.** For a safety and health program to succeed, workers must participate in developing and implementing every element of
- **Use federal OSHA's safety and health program management guidelines as a resource.** In 2016, federal OSHA updated its safety and health program management guidelines for the first time in nearly three decades. OSHA's Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs is an

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***SAFETY PROGRAM,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7***

excellent resource for companies developing or revising written health and safety programs. For the first time, OSHA created a separate set of guidelines for a particular industry – construction – because of its unique challenges. In many cases, the Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs in Construction will be more applicable to the landscape industry than the general guidelines meant for all other industries.

- **Be sure your program includes core elements (outlined below) recommended by federal OSHA.** The descriptions below are from the Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs in Construction.
- **Be sure tools are equipped with necessary safety guards and switches. - MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP** – Top management demonstrates its commitment to eliminating hazards and to continuously improving workplace safety and health, communicates that commitment to workers and sets program expectations and responsibilities. Managers at all levels make safety and health a core organizational value, establish safety and health goals and objectives, provide adequate resources and support for the program and set a good example.
- **- WORKER PARTICIPATION** – Workers and their representatives are involved in all aspects of the program, including setting goals, identifying and reporting hazards, investigating incidents and tracking progress. All workers, including contractors and temporary workers, understand their roles and responsibilities under the program and what they need to do to

effectively carry them out. Workers are encouraged and have means to communicate openly with management and to report safety and health concerns or suggest improvements, without fear of retaliation. Any potential barriers or obstacles to worker participation in the program (for example, language, lack of information or disincentives) are removed or addressed.

• **- HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT** – Procedures are put in place to continually identify workplace hazards and evaluate risks. Safety and health hazards from routine, non-routine and emergency situations are identified and assessed. An initial assessment of existing hazards, exposures and control measures is followed by periodic inspections and reassessments to identify new hazards. Any incidents are investigated with the goal of identifying the root causes. Identified hazards are prioritized for control.

• **- HAZARD PREVENTION AND CONTROL** – Employers and workers cooperate to identify and select methods for eliminating, preventing or controlling workplace hazards. Controls are selected according to a hierarchy that uses engineering solutions first, followed by safe work practices, administrative controls and finally personal protective equipment (PPE). A plan is developed that ensures controls are implemented, interim protection is provided, progress is tracked and the effectiveness of controls is verified.

• **- EDUCATION AND TRAINING** – All workers are trained to understand how the program works and how to carry out the responsibilities assigned to them under the program. Employers,

managers and supervisors receive training on safety concepts and their responsibility for protecting workers' rights and responding to workers' reports and concerns. All workers are trained to recognize workplace hazards and to understand the control measures that have been implemented.

• **- PROGRAM EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT** – Control measures are periodically evaluated for effectiveness. Processes are established to monitor program performance, verify program implementation and identify program shortcomings and opportunities for improvement. Necessary actions are taken to improve the program and overall safety and health performance.

• **- COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION FOR EMPLOYERS ON MULTIEMPLOYER WORKSITES** – General contractors, contractors and staffing agencies commit to providing the same level of safety and health protection to all employees. General contractors, contractors, subcontractors and staffing agencies communicate the hazards present at the worksite and the hazards that work of contract workers may create on site. General contractors establish specifications and qualifications for contractors and staffing agencies. Prior to beginning work, general contractors, contractors and staffing agencies coordinate on work planning and scheduling to identify and resolve any conflicts that could impact safety or health.

- **Know and follow state and local requirements for safety and health programs.** See links to state requirements here.

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**SAFETY PROGRAM,
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8**

- **Be aware landscape-industry safety and health program templates are available.** You can customize a template such as the Safe Company Program Manual offered through NALP when developing your firm's safety and health program.
- **Share the written program with employees.** Post your safety and health program for all workers to see, and give each employee a copy.
- **Follow all aspects of your written program.** The written document means practically nothing if your company does not adhere to it.

Employee Dos and Don'ts

Do:

- **Know why a health and safety program is needed.** Parts of your job, such as working with tools and machinery, from heights and around electricity, are inherently dangerous, but an effective safety and health program can greatly minimize risks.
- **Understand your participation is vital to your company's ability to develop an effective health and safety program.** Worker perspectives, expertise and input are crucial.
- **If your company already has a health and safety program, read it.** Know that your company should train you to understand how the safety and health program works and how to carry out the responsibilities assigned to you under the program.
- **Contribute to the improvement of your company's safety and health program.** Point out hazards and make suggestions whenever something comes to mind. Share any information and experiences

that could be beneficial to management.

Don't:

- **Be afraid to ask questions.** If you don't understand any portion of the safety and health program, ask your supervisor for clarification.
- **Perform any task until you understand information pertaining to it in your company's safety and health program.** Your company should train you to recognize workplace hazards and to understand the control measures that have been implemented.
- **Keep suggestions to yourself.** Federal OSHA states workers should be able to communicate openly with management and to report safety and health concerns or suggest improvements, without fear of retaliation.
- **Avoid safety and health program-related activities.** You should participate in program

development and revision, jobsite inspections, training presentations, close-call investigations and safety committees whenever possible.

Additional Resources

Federal OSHA's Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs –
https://www.osha.gov/shpguidelines/docs/OSHA_SHP_Recommended_Practices.pdf

Federal OSHA's Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs in Construction –
https://www.osha.gov/shpguidelines/docs/8524_OSHA_Construction_Guidelines_R4.pdf

State safety and health standards and regulations –
<https://www.osha.gov/dcsp/osp/statestandards.html>

NALP Safe Company Program –
https://www.landscapeprofessionals.org/LP/Stand-Out/Safe_Company_Program/LP/Safety/safe_company_program.aspx



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Business Planning During COVID-19

The CDC suggests that employers plan to be able to respond in a flexible way to varying levels of severity of a possible outbreak and be prepared to refine business response plans as needed and communicate regularly with employees. A few things to consider include ways to reduce transmission among staff, protecting people who are at higher risk for adverse health complications, maintaining business operations, and minimizing adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains.

Key considerations

- **Disease severity** (i.e., number of people who are sick, hospitalization and death rates) in the community where the business is located
- **Prepare for possible increased numbers of employee absences** due to illness in employees and their family members, dismissals of early childhood programs and K-12 schools due to high levels of absenteeism or illness.
- **Cross-train personnel** to perform essential functions so that the workplace can operate even if key staff members are absent.
- **Explore whether you can es-**

tablish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting for some employees) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees.

- **Be prepared to change your business practices if needed to maintain critical operations** (e.g., identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, or temporarily suspend some of your operations if needed).
- **Coordination with state and local health officials is strongly encouraged** for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside. Since the intensity of an outbreak may differ according to geographic location, local health officials will be issuing guidance specific to their communities.
- **Share your plan with employees** and explain what human resources policies, workplace and leave flexibilities, and pay and benefits will be available to them.
- **Limit employee huddles and in-person meetings**

\$2T Stimulus package approved

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has put a major strain on every aspect of daily life around the world, including the United States. As spread of the disease shows no sign of slowing down, there is a steadily increasing concern in the United States regarding the health and wellness of not only our citizens, but the economy as well. In response, the United States Congress has been negotiating a historic stimulus

package to address the havoc caused by the pandemic.

It appears Congress' hard work has paid off, as they just passed a \$2 trillion package to provide a jolt to the economy reeling from the deadly virus. All Americans would do well to understand the package's provisions, as it will offer direct relief to businesses and individuals alike. [Click HERE](#) for more information.

OLCA 2020 Upcoming Events

APRIL

- 25 Washington County Master Gardener Association Gardenfest Plant Sale - **CANCELLED**

For more information about these events go to www.oregonlandscape.org

NALP Take Action on NEW Grassroots Letter to Legislators

As states work to contain the COVID-19 epidemic, policies are put into place that define what businesses are essential. Landscaping is not explicitly mentioned in many of these documents, rather the services that landscapers provide are inferred. We need your help to further confirm these policies so that landscapers can continue to provide our essential services that keep properties safe, sanitary, and in operation. Using [this link](#), you can quickly and easily message all of your state elected officials, asking them to support landscape contractors as essential businesses.