

From the Boston Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/boston/news/2020/05/21/ma-construction-firms-weigh-safety.html>

Rebuilding the industry

Construction firms weigh safety, try to make up for lost time

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Worker safety has long been of paramount importance on construction sites. But this week, with construction across the city and state reopening more broadly, safety standards will be taken to an even higher level.

Suffolk Construction has installed FDA-approved InfraRed fever detectors at each of its job sites, which allows mass temperature screenings for each of its workers. Many Suffolk crews are also using Triax monitors on their hard hats, which sound alarms whenever workers get within six feet of each other.

Jeff Gouveia, the president and general manager of Suffolk's Northeast region, said that his team has had to re-engineer the logistics of each project, staggering when workers come into the site for temperature checks. While safety protocols can be tracked with objective measurements, it's also important to communicate often so workers feel more secure and safe about returning to job sites, he said.

"There's comfort in communication," Gouveia said. "We've tried to keep everybody, to the greatest extent possible, updated as to what we are thinking. ... You say, 'Here's what we're thinking, what do you think?' Because there's no playbook for this."

Construction jobs often have hundreds of workers onsite, with workers from the contractor, subcontractors and other building trades working on schedules that can change daily. Safety plans need to be tailored for each site, outlining everything from where workers are coming into a site, how close workers will be standing and who they'll be coming into contact with that day, said Jeff Navin, vice president of project management for Consigli Construction Co.

"If we can help every worker, whether it's a subcontractor, one of our workers or even one of our project engineers, for example, understand the risk of the situation, all of a sudden they will start to think about others," Navin said. "That's really what it boils down to. It's not just about them. It's about how they protect others when they're onsite."

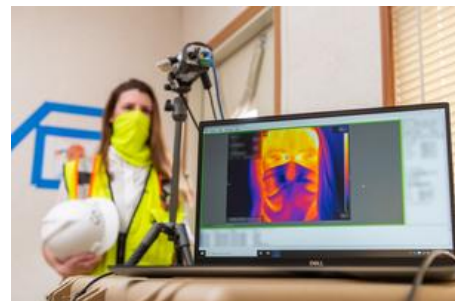
Maintaining communication between contractors and subcontractors, and in turn each of the workers coming onsite, is key. Electrical contractor Gaston Electrical has its own required safety guidelines, but crews will follow a general contractor's regulations if they're more stringent, said Mike Weber, a principal with the Norwood-based firm.

"I think ours are pretty stringent. Maybe a little too stringent. And that's OK," he said. "Our No. 1 priority is to make sure field employees feel safe, regardless of our written protocols. The reality is our people need to feel safe."

Face shields and masks will be a priority for Gaston workers, and every job site will have a kit with safety gear and other information. The company is suggesting workers take regular breaks to air out rooms they're working in, to wash tools and to take a break from the sometimes-claustrophobic masks and shields.

In Boston, many in the construction industry are considering how to handle a loss of 10 weeks of building time and revenue. Gaston Electrical was forced to halt work on 90% of its projects amid the construction moratorium in Boston and Cambridge, Weber said.

While firms are planning how to manage the financial hit, many have said it's too early to determine how contractors will work to make up the lost time — either through adding new shifts, an extra day of work per week or something else. Boston-based



LOU JONES

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Corderman & Co. said in a statement that it “remains optimistic” that its core business opportunities remain the same.

“Leases still expire regardless of a pandemic, and those clients will require changes to their existing infrastructure, growth depending on their business model, as well as the revisions to their current strategies and layouts in order to prepare for this ‘new normal’ we all hear about,” said Barrie Ferraro, principal and director of business development at Corderman, in a statement.