

**In This Issue:
COVID Impacts
on Western
Chapter
Professionals -
Adaptations,
Suggestions &
Guidance**

[Readiness for
Professionals](#)

[Stover Seed](#)

[Inspections and
Building Industry](#)

[Kelley Erosion Control
Comstock Seed](#)

[WBS Inc.](#)

[Oakridge Landscape](#)

[Profile Products](#)

[LSC Env. Products](#)

[Dietz Hydroseeding](#)

[Adapting to Comply](#)

[Products and Services](#)

[Directory](#)

[Professional Listings](#)

Be prepared means
being ready to:

- Assess;
- Adapt;
- Act; and
- Achieve.

***"Great learning comes
when you are in
uncharted waters.
Control what you can
control."*** - Judith Guido

**Readiness for Professionals - Jeff
Endicott**

Merriam-Webster.com defines “readiness” as, “the quality or state of being ready, a state of preparation”. So, before diving in too deep, let’s transform this topic from “Readiness for Professionals” to the elemental topic of “Preparedness for Professionals.”

Naturally, one might ask, “Be prepared for what?”

That question was simply and eloquently answered in 1907 by British Army officer Lieutenant General Robert Baden-Powell who answered, “Why, for any old thing.” Baden-Powell further wrote, “Be prepared means you are always in a state of readiness in mind and body to do your duty.”

A true professional in the erosion and sediment control industry will “be prepared” to utilize their specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities gained through intensive academic preparation and experience to address the conditions present. And when the conditions present are unique or different from the norm, including a downright disaster, the true professional will be comfortable in adapting normal or standard practice to the situation at hand. A true professional does not need to “have done it before” in order to “do it now”; and that is what makes our industry exciting.

The COVID-19 situation in the United States and around the globe has presented challenges to the erosion and sediment control industry. Some individuals in the industry have just shrugged their shoulders and walked away from the challenges.

The true professionals in the industry have approached the situation in a state of preparedness that allowed them to assess, adapt, act, and achieve in a responsive and responsible manner.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Insights from Your Board of Directors and the Field

The following is a compilation of reports across various industries.

Stover Seed - Stephen Knutson

COVID has forced us to evaluate how we get business done and may show ways to improve.

We are open since our clientele is not retail and we supply essential businesses with supplies. We have a large facility that allows people to keep a minimum of 6 feet apart, and we have reinforced the need to maintain this distance. We ensure that masks and gloves are available and have placed sanitized wipes on both sides of all entry doors. We encourage those who feel sick to stay home and we have posted proper cleaning / disinfecting instructions in all common areas and notices to wash hands for 20 seconds. In addition, we have altered our business operations as follows:

- Only employees can enter our facilities. Will call orders must be placed and paid for over the phone.
- Will call orders are picked up on the loading dock; no signature is required, we simply write down the consignee's name.
- Our drivers make deliveries with gloves and masks on; they also do not get a signature for receipt and simply record the consignee's name.
- Salesforce is working from home until the stay at home order has been lifted.
- Internal business operations have not changed as tasks are individual jobs and not group projects.

Business is doing ok in the nursery/garden center trade. Primarily vegetable seed and grass seed are selling; business is about 40 % of normal. Institutional business (cities and schools) is about 10 % of normal. The contractor business is public works and some residential business but is about 30 % of normal.

Summary:

The primary business currently is homeowners doing at home projects either purchasing at garden centers or hiring a contractor for larger home projects. Cities and schools do not have the manpower to do any projects as most are not going to work. However, we feel that once workers return to work there will be a large push to get work done. Rain in March and April has slowed down public work projects and when good weather returns that business should pick up. ***COVID has forced us to evaluate how we get business done and may show ways to improve. Salesmen are seeing that lots of interactions can be achieved from the home office by phone and email, which helps them reach a larger territory in a day.***

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Inspections and Building Industry - Jeanne Duarte/Kim Aldrich

Staying diligent, knowing your local regulations, and practicing social distancing - that'll keep us all working through this.

On March 11, the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), their response is focused concurrently on lessening the spread and impact of this virus. The federal government is working closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, as well as public health partners, to respond to this public health threat. As the coronavirus disease advances across the United States, various industries and nearly all aspects of the supply chain continue to be impacted, including many in the construction industry.

In a recent EC&M article on the COVID-19 impacts to construction, EC&M shared the results of a survey by the Associated General Contractors of America AGC. The Chief Economist Ken Simonson delivered a coronavirus survey to the organization's members, with a total of 909 responses as of March 19. Notable results include 28% of respondents being asked by an owner or government agency to stop current work; 11% were asked by an owner or government agency to stop future work; and 22% received a notice from suppliers that deliveries will be late or canceled. Regarding project delays or disruptions, 16% experienced a shortage of materials, equipment, or parts; 11% saw a shortage of craft workers, including subcontractors; 18% saw a shortage of government workers, and 8% received information that an infected worker has potentially infected a worksite. The home building industry is one of many impacted by state and federal mandates that were created to lessen the impact of the virus. Some states and cities have called for a halt to construction. Even if cities or states do not call for direct halts to construction, the effects of coronavirus as a pandemic are far-reaching. However, as an industry, we rallied to the challenges of the pandemic and are working together to protect the workers and keep building where construction is considered an essential business. Building homes safely, selling homes safely, and closing homes safely by implementing new best management practices is paramount.

Focusing on safety is the number one priority for the construction industry. OSHA issued new guidelines on preparing workplaces for COVID-19. Since information and news on the disease keep evolving, ingenuity, and problem-solving in the field make for creative solutions to OSHA and CDC guidelines.

Safety officers are designated on job sites to educate and monitor compliance with COVID-19 guidelines. Personal protection devices now include face masks for every person on a job site. One trade is in a home at a time and 6 feet is the new personal space during field meetings. Food trucks, if allowed on a job site, must practice social distancing between their customers. Condiments can no longer be shared between customers so food truck vendors must supply individually packaged condiments and food items. The CDC highly recommends frequent handwashing to prevent the spread of the virus. Handwashing stations are in high demand with short supply, so some builders have come up with creative solutions to the shortage using metal trash cans, filled with gravel, mounting a soap container, and a hose with a shutoff valve.

To ensure SWPPP compliance, non-stormwater is contained with rock and secondary containment; overflows are pumped to the sanitary sewer.

When it comes to actually conducting a stormwater inspection, we've had to

change our methods as well. Many of the sites still use paper as the primary method of inspection documentation, as the California CGP requires wet signatures on inspection documents. But, many of the sites have also drastically limited access to the trailer, where documents are usually kept. We no longer can perform an inspection, write it up, and deliver it to the trailer, sit down and have a conversation with the superintendent. Things that we've had to modify in order to meet the social distancing requirements include the use of face coverings when in public. We also no longer conduct meetings in the trailer. If we have to meet in person, we do it outside - 6' apart, wearing face coverings. We no longer transfer documents physically, we use electronic means such as email. This does present an issue with the fact the California permit requires wet signatures on the inspection documents. Our conversations with the local regional boards we work with indicate they have been very understanding and have accepted our methods. Once the inspection is completed and the report written up, a scanned signed inspection form is emailed. Once this is all over, we'll catch up with the paperwork in the field.

In addition to all the additional measures in place listed above, each municipality and each job site has different rules in place. What works in Ventura County may not work in Los Angeles County. Some restrictions are being lifted, some are not. You must know your specific requirements for each agency. Municipalities have modified their inspection protocols as well. Understand what those are - you may be sending videos and/or photos to get your inspections signed off by their inspectors. Each job site may have set specific guidelines for working on their site. Be sure to know and understand what those are. Most are requiring masks at all times, 6' distancing, no inside meetings, and I even have a job site that checks my temperature every time I come to the site to conduct an inspection.

So, what do we know? We know that what is working today will probably have to be modified again before this is all over. *Staying diligent, knowing your local regulations, and practicing social distancing and that'll keep us all working through this.*

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Kelley Erosion Control, Contractors - Claudia Chambers/Kym Kelley

How COVID-19 Has Impacted Our Company

As a small business owner keeping up with new laws and regulations daily is very time-consuming. Things change daily. This is a new reality with many entities working remotely. We have a long list of webinars offered daily by many different agencies/companies on many subjects of what we need to know as well as emailed updates. We are licensed in both California and Nevada. Keeping up with two states, federal and local directives is overwhelming.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Comstock Seed, Supplier - Ed Kleiner

Evidently, Our Seed Business Is An “Essential Business” During The Pandemic.

Nature does not take time off for human ailments, and restoration work that is scheduled happens at specific times of the year. This means that farmers and ranchers are working their fields. This means that homeowners who are generally confined to their residences are preoccupying themselves with gardening, landscape improvements, etc. This means that ongoing construction projects are being landscaped as they are completed and for more arid land work, the earlier in the spring the better. The “miracle March” had delayed a lot of landscape work and with the clearing weather, we are busier than ever. Add to this normal seasonal bubble, we have expansive growth occurring along the Sierra front. New housing development everywhere, the rapid expansion of the Reno Industrial Park east of town, the completion of new highways such as the Southeast connector, Veteran’s Parkway, the Carson City freeway, and others are making our spring bubble one of our biggest, despite the pandemic. With proper precautions, we are prospering so far with only minor interruptions due to supply lines, shipping bottlenecks, and remnant winter weather.

[**BACK TO TOP**](#)

WBS Inc. - Julie Etra

I just did a SWPPP inspection today. No one around. Walked the site with mask and clipboard.

Our work has been delayed and reduced in scope. We work in two states, where protocols are different. On top of state and local protocol, our clients may have other levels of safety compliance. In addition, we worry that for several comprehensive and pending projects where we anticipated work as sub-consultants, we may be replaced by staff as a cost-saving measure. There is a lot of uncertainty. We have applied for the PPP federal program to obtain two months of payroll, but we are in what is most likely a long line.

[**BACK TO TOP**](#)

Oakridge Landscape - Richard Dunbar

Oakridge Landscape is a full-service landscape company, providing landscaping, construction, maintenance, and erosion control services. Our services tend to be impacted by our clients. Depending on whom we are working for, and where, we are seeing different impacts on our operations.

From our landscape construction side, we have seen a little slow down due to the stay at home quarantine and the new housing sales have slowed down and production has slowed down as well.

On the landscape maintenance side of things, we continue to be able to maintain existing landscape contracts, keeping the landscapes mowed and green.

On the erosion control side, we have been able to continue to install and maintain BMPs on construction sites with very little impact. The State of California has issued directives stating the implementation and enforcement of stormwater regulations is considered an essential business and that is keeping us busy with site BMP maintenance and installation.

When it comes to our operations side, we've had to make some adjustments to how we operate. Our crews can no longer ride 5-6 in a truck. Right now, we are only allowing four people at a time in the company vehicles. All the crews must wear PPE (gloves and masks).

Some of our office staff are working from home and others are in the office so this way we do not have people working next to each other.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Profile Products - Danny Reynaga

Hydraulic mulch supply - there are no concerns for materials related to COVID 19. Profile has plenty of product to supply construction sites. We do not see any issues with product availability going forward.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

LSC Environmental Products - Tyler Palmer

LSC has not had any supply issues during this pandemic. Our biggest change is that we are using video conferencing a lot more. I like it a lot because it eliminates some of the travel that I have as the Western Regional Manager. It seems that my clients or customers are adapting quickly to the world of video conferencing as well.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Dietz Hydroseeding - Ron Dietz

The COVID-19 shutdown has impacted our business; we are doing about 25% of what we have done in previous years for this time of year. The rain events in March and early April also had an impact on the amount of work we were able to perform. We have contracts on projects that were scheduled but due to the restrictions on the businesses of our clients, most of these projects are on hold. The issue seems to be mainly the lack of administrative personnel to perform the logistics necessary for inspections, job orders, purchase orders, material approvals, and payment. We have had a few payments on previously completed work delayed by several weeks because clients had personnel working remotely. We are confident that there will be more work in late summer and fall assuming that the shutdowns are partially or completely lifted.

We have made significant changes in our practices, as have most businesses. Sanitizing, social distancing, and PPE are all mandated and utilized by all employees at all times - at the yard and on job sites. We have instituted total separation from our crew from job and office personnel. We only allow two persons per vehicle and the vehicles are all sanitized upon returning to the yard. We are still able to effectively perform our work. If any employee is ill, they must not report to work and they receive paid quarantine time off. Thankfully none of our employees have become sick or tested positive.

Our vendors are all assuring us that there are plenty of materials available. We

are well stocked and all of the materials have a long shelf life so there is no degradation of the quality. We may see some shortages when work picks up.

The most important thing we are doing is assisting each employee to keep themselves and their families healthy. The second is to ensure that our employees are paid enough to meet their financial obligation and to maintain their company-paid health insurance.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Adapting to Comply - Melanie Sotelo

Last month, the State Water Board Resources Control Board issued a clarification that timely compliance with all Water Board (regional and state) requirements by the regulated community was considered to be an essential function under the Governor's Executive Order N-33-20. For many jurisdictions and agencies, this determination required the evaluation of their NPDES program implementation measures for any necessary modifications to maintain compliance with social distancing guidelines and face-covering requirements, where applicable, all while continuing to maintain compliance with all Water Board Orders.

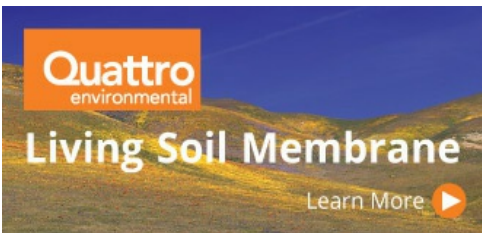
In order to continue compliance with NPDES Permit related requirements, many jurisdictions have implemented the use of remote technologies, such as VPN access, allowing most office employees to remain at home while still completing activities to keep their agency's resources available and flowing. ***A combination of minimal essential in-office personnel, combined with at-home personnel, have allowed many agencies to discover they are navigating a new normal, and successfully at that.*** While only a select few of workers may have previously been familiar with video conferencing, now many are finding that Zoom, Teams, Blue Jeans, WebEx, and many other programs, are a common part of their work-week routines.

However, when it comes to field inspectors, staying at home was and is not feasible, requiring jurisdictions to provide needed personal protective equipment (PPE) in order to keep inspectors safe while supporting ongoing jurisdictional and development activities. Armed with PPE that may include face coverings, masks, gloves, disinfectants, and wipes, among other items, field workers and inspectors continue to conduct required activities and inspections. Essential field activities required modifications to be incorporated into normal implementation practices, which have included drive-by inspections or contact-less inspections, remaining at least 6-feet away from others, and using cell phones and email methods to discuss areas of concern and to show updated compliance activities.

Jurisdictions and agencies have shown that through their willingness to adapt, activities related to NPDES Permit compliance can be achieved while implementing social distancing practices. ***It's important to note a key ingredient to successful adaption, is the willingness of the individual to comply. The successful implementation of these adapted compliance measures is only achieved by the dedication of each individual worker to aid in their implementation. To all of those individual workers, credit is due.***


[BACK TO TOP](#)

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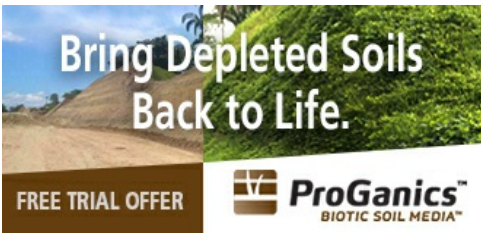
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