

PA Construction STATE SAFETY GUIDANCE

Guidelines Available for Construction Industry Reopening

By Mario Scavello
PEN ARGYL - Following Governor Wolf's announcement that the construction industry can resume normal operations on May 1, the Department of Health extended guidelines to ensure these employers can operate in a way that minimizes the risk of spreading COVID-19.

The guidelines include cleaning frequently touched surfaces, providing sufficient distance between employees, staggering breaks and shifts, providing masks for employees and more. The full list of guidelines is available here.

<https://www.governor.pa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/20200415-SOH-worker-safety-order.pdf>

Deadline Extended to Apply for PHEAA State Grants

By Mario Scavello
PEN ARGYL - In response to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) has extended the deadline for college students to apply for state grants from May 1 to May 15 for the 2020-21 academic year. The new deadline applies both to renewals and first-time applicants. More information on how to apply for state grants and how the coronavirus will impact state grant and special loan programs is available on PHEAA's website <https://www.pheaa.org/about/covid-19.shtml>.

In addition, the agency recently offered a three-month forbearance on all PHEAA-owned private loans for borrowers affected by COVID-19. More details are available here. Borrowers must contact their loan servicer, American Education Services (AES), in order to request this forbearance. The AES COVID-19 webpage includes more information about options for borrowers to postpone payments for both federal and private student loans.



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Ken Field

Owner of Slate Belt Energy Services

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

Make Smart Choices

There is no incentive at the moment for homeowners to do anything related to energy. It seems that doing things because they make sense is never enough incentive to tackle a project. Leaky roofs get patched, flooded basements get repaired but most upgrades are driven by pain or pleasure. When the government had tax credits for insulation work, people were all over that plan. That was a pleasure example. The pain example was from when utility cost was very high. Oil was almost \$4.00/ gallon for a short time and that got the attention of people who used a lot of it. We upgraded a lot of systems during that time and even if you just looked at based on potential savings, it was a great move. Now oil is very inexpensive and there is not enough financial discomfort to make people want to upgrade their equipment. I haven't seen it affect the number of people who still want to convert to natural gas but I suspect it will slow down that trend too.

I also have seen it creating much more interest in air sanitizers and air purifiers. One of the things that most air purifiers can't remove is viruses. That doesn't mean you have nothing to gain from owning one but I would rather see people upgrade inefficient and outdated heating and air conditioning equipment than to spend a large amount of money on some air purifier that will require a new bulb every year costing \$120. I know how these things work as time goes on and most people will stop replacing bulbs when the fear of the current pandemic has faded. So many useless accessories are hanging on systems I service every week. Humidifiers that were ineffective, air cleaners that are restrictive and cause air conditioner problems, and electronic air cleaners that haven't worked in years. None of these customers seem to want the accessories repaired and sure don't want to pay to have them removed. A humidifier that doesn't work can actually allow mold to grow on the internal parts and cause much more harm than it ever did good.

There is always advertising out there to get people excited about something and even though it isn't my job to counteract that, I can't just play into the hype and take someone's money. I always have a practical discussion with people to share everything I know about a product before I agree to install something. I won't relieve someone of their money just because they have a misconception about a product.

Ken Field is the owner of Field's Service, Inc. and Slate Belt Energy Services. He has over 40 years of experience in heating, air conditioning and is certificated by RESNET and BPI in various areas of energy conservation. He can be reached at 610-599-8832 or at www.SlateBeltEnergy.com

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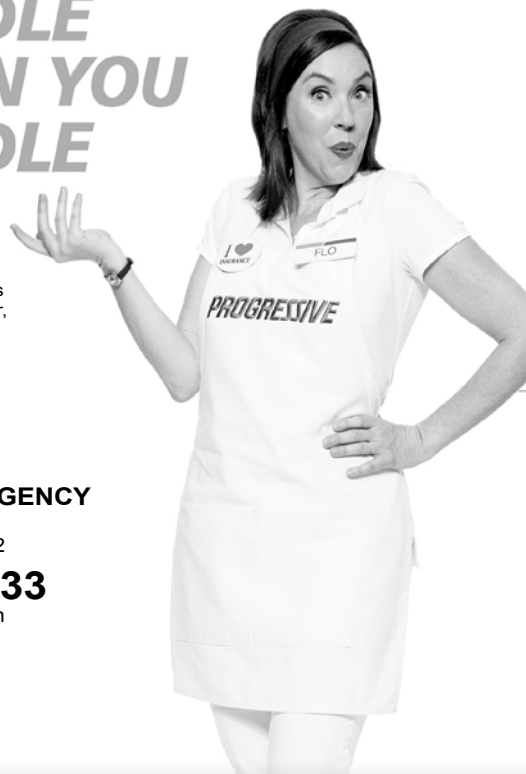
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Update on Gracedale Nursing Home

By Becky Bartlett

EASTON - Northampton County continues to do everything possible during the Covid-19 pandemic to limit exposure to the residents and staff at Gracedale.

"We appreciate the bravery and dedication of Gracedale employees," says Lamont McClure. "They're working tirelessly to keep some of our most vulnerable residents safe during this outbreak."

As of April 20th, fifty residents have tested positive for the virus. Six are in recovery in an isolation ward, pending a return to their units. Unfortunately, four residents have passed away.

Out of the 700 employees which work at Gracedale, twenty-three have tested positive for the Coronavirus. Five have finished their quarantine periods and are back at work.

Gracedale is the largest nursing home under one roof in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. There are more than 600 residents living at Gracedale with approximately 700 people tasked with caring for them.

EMS Distribution of PPE to County Agencies

By Becky Bartlett

EASTON - On April 20th, Northampton County Emergency Management Services (EMS) distributed, N-95 masks, surgical masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, MediClean Sanitary Solution, and protective clothing to the Coroner's Office, Juvenile Probation, Bangor Borough, Bethlehem Township, Forks Township, Hanover Township and the City of Easton.

"It is important that our first responders and county employees have the proper equipment to protect themselves as well as the public," says Lamont McClure. "Northampton County EMS is working diligently to provide county agencies with the necessary PPE."

Donations of hand sanitizer, MediClean Solutions and masks came from a local companies. Masks, etc. came from PEMA.



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