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The New Normal: 3 Ways the Coronavirus Crisis is Changing Construction



“If not yet bright, the future for the construction industry and our workers appears very positive with important enhancements to security, safety and productivity driven by the current crisis experience.”

— John Hakel, Executive Director, Southern California partnership for Jobs

In the span of a few short months, the coronavirus crisis has demanded sweeping changes from the U.S. construction industry, and experts say many of them will remain in place even after the outbreak recedes. From reliance on new technologies to a renewed focus on worksite safety and the increased influence of organized labor, changes brought by the pandemic may have a lasting impact on U.S. construction.

Here are three ways that the pandemic has altered the construction industry for the near future and beyond.

1. The use of technology will increase

New technologies are being implemented to keep construction projects moving through the pandemic and beyond. Emphasis on social distancing on jobsites is expected to continue even after the current health threat passes. So, to ensure safety and defend against outbreaks, companies are leaning on tech tools, from the use of drones to monitors that track social distancing — and developers are absorbing the costs of many of these new technologies that enable essential construction work to continue.

2. Union influence will grow

Organized labor has accomplished incredible feats throughout America's history. Amid the pandemic, however, trade unions have taken on prominent roles in advocating for members' best interests in keeping sites operational and safe.

3. Supply chains will recalibrate

The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the global supply chain. With the U.S. sourcing nearly a third of building materials from China, developers have faced considerable disruptions and delays. U.S. builders have noted delays and shortages in items like steel. As concerns over sourcing and supply chains linger, many firms will be hesitant to resume orders from Chinese suppliers and the construction industry will likely seek solutions by increasing manufacturing at home and in nearby countries such as Mexico.

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