ESFPA Coronavirus Announcement
March 18, 2020

Given the rapidly evolving coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, the Empire State Forest Products Association (ESFPA) and our affiliate companies – New York Logger Training, Inc. (NYLT), Empire State Forestry Foundation (ESFF) and New York Bioenergy Association (NYBA) - would like to inform you of the steps we are taking to minimize risk to our staff, partners and members and how these steps may affect our operations in the coming weeks. We are also taking steps to help our company operations to stay engaged during this difficult period by making use of tools for virtual work.

ESFPA’s policy regarding COVID-19 reflects the latest that we know of from both the federal Center for Disease Control site and NYS Department of Health sites for guidance on COVID-19. Obviously these guidelines are evolving and we will evolve our policies and operations to follow those guidelines and requirements.

Impacts to ESFPA Operations

At this time, the ESFPA Board has issued the following guidance to staff.

All non-essential staff travel is postponed through April 25th, with dates subject to change based on the evolving situation. If travel is deemed to be essential during this time, ESFPA staff will seek supervisory or the ESFPA Chair approval before making travel commitments.

The Board has also advised staff to postpone any partner or large group events scheduled to take place during this time period, and to move in-person meetings to a tele-conference or video-conference format.

Finally, all staff and contractors will telework to the maximum extent practicable.

That said, ESFPA will remain fully operational outside of travel, in-person meetings and accommodation of responsible “social distancing”. Our members, partners, contractors and the general public should contact us at any time.

NYLT Trained Logger Certification and Certification Programs

On March 18th the NYLT, Inc. Board agreed to suspend all logger training through April 25th. NYLT will re-assess the training situation prior to April 25th and issue guidance on training that may or may not be offered after April 25th. NYLT has also authorized up to three credits of on-line continuing education to be acquired for maintaining certification through December 18th. We have also worked with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and third-party certified member companies to ensure that discretion and flexibility will be used in the requirements for harvesting on
Certified lands and securing certified timber and fiber. Both the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification Systems (PEFC) and Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) have released guidance in consideration of the COVID-19 event to its certificate holders intended to address the impact travel restrictions and health concerns may have on certification requirements and audits. See our links in our Alert for PEFC and SFI guidance documents.

For those seeking recertification, there are on-line training options if loggers have access to online workshops. Links can be found on the NYLT website. However, sensible discretion and flexibility will be afforded to those seeing recertification as well.

All certifications and recertifications will be given extensions THROUGH 12/18/20. In the meantime N will continuously assess the situation and make changes as necessary.

**Support for and Recommendations to our Members, Contractors and Partners**

We care deeply about the health and well-being of our members, contractors and partners that we all interact with on a daily basis. We know that many of you work for companies and organizations that have their own policies to deal with this difficult period and we urge you to respect those. While we understand that ESFPA staff restrictions on travel and suspending in-person meetings has impacts to the services we provide, we are making every effort to minimize the extent of these impacts. We also recognize and appreciate that many of you are already taking steps to reduce risk to yourselves and your employees and customers even as you stay engaged in our work.

It is difficult at times to discern just what policies and orders are coming from the federal and State governments as we manage our business operations. We have been following the below listed links which have some tremendous information for both business managers and employees.


**U.S. Chamber of Commerce** – [https://www.uschamber.com/coronavirus](https://www.uschamber.com/coronavirus)


This situation is evolving daily, and ESFPA will continue to re-evaluate our policies and guidance in consideration of the latest recommendations and the safety of all. We will update you as we make adjustments based upon the most current information.

Thank you for the work you do for New York’s forests and wood product manufacturers. Know that we appreciate the support you provide to us and that we will continue to serve your advocacy needs in Albany and Washington despite this challenging time. Please be safe.