

Co-chairs Roblan and Holvey, and the other members of the Joint Special Committee On Coronavirus Response,

Thank you for your dedication to helping Oregonians during the coronavirus pandemic.

I am submitting this public testimony to bring attention to the safety standards at active construction sites in Oregon. In particular, the lack of attention to adequately preparing the sites to minimize exposure to and transmission of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

I work on a new construction site in NE Portland as a journeyman electrician. Since the coronavirus reached our state, my job site has deviated little from normal day-to-day operations. While the Centers for Disease and Control issues safety guidelines for employers and employees, those guidelines are not being implemented in the field as equally as much as they are in the front offices of contracting companies large and small.

Guidelines like social distancing and disinfection of common areas or tools are not being followed or enforced on crowded construction sites. Upon raising this concern and safety hazard to the general contractor on-site, I was told it was my decision on whether to remain at the job site. This puts me in the position of weighing for myself and my team whether to continue working at an unsafe job site--a health risk--or whether to leave the job site, an economic risk.

Today, Friday, March 20, 2020, my hand was forced as someone who showed symptoms similar to those of coronavirus was allowed back on the job site prior to the CDC guidelines on how long to stay at home. I was forced to make the decision for my team and to leave because the job site is not a safe place. There is no clear protocol in Oregon for how to handle a potential exposure to other employees on a job site. One resource I found online is from NECA, which states: "It is recommended that if an employee shows signs of fever or other respiratory illness that can be communicable, they should stay home to prevent infecting other workers and follow the advice of a licensed health care provider for their recovery. Only return to work after symptoms have subsided for at least 24-36 hours." URL for this document <https://www.necanet.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/coronavirussafetytalk.pdf?sfvrsn=0>.

I bring this to your attention as you consider Oregon's response to the spread of coronavirus. If the work that construction workers are doing is considered an essential service to our state, I ask that you ensure the health of these workers is as essential as the economic activity they are delivering to Oregon's economy.

Sincerely,

Israel Cruz
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