



March 18, 2020

The Vice President  
Old Executive Office Building  
Washington, DC 20501

**RE: COVID-19 Emergency Declarations**

Dear Vice President Pence:

As leaders of our nation consider emergency measures to protect the American public from the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) and allied organizations respectfully request policymakers take steps to ensure that state and local policies safeguard the abilities of essential businesses to continue operations. Specifically, if you are considering “Shelter in Place” orders or similar measures, we urge you to clearly designate pulp and paper mills and converting plants, and businesses involved in the distribution and sale of our essential products, as “essential businesses,” and exclude them from the restrictions of any such orders/measures. This will provide certainty and clarity for our businesses and employees to meet essential public needs. As this situation progresses, it makes sense to have a uniform response across the country to ensure the continuity of essential manufacturing, including paper products.

AF&PA serves to advance a sustainable U.S. pulp, paper, packaging, tissue and wood products manufacturing industry through fact-based public policy and marketplace advocacy. AF&PA member companies make products essential for everyday life from renewable and recyclable resources.

Recognizing that it is becoming necessary to curtail and even suspend aspects of commerce to slow the spread of COVID-19, we urge the careful crafting and implementation of policies that preserve and advance the safety of citizens while ensuring that businesses that provide critical products for public care and well-being are excluded from restrictions. As state and local governments define essential activities that will be protected, it is important to include businesses that support those activities.

Paper products play an important role in ongoing safety efforts and in supporting essential commerce, such as facilitating product safety and safe commerce, enhancing hygiene and responding to COVID-19 challenges. Paper companies make essential products, including among many others, tissue products, packaging for food and food distribution and other consumer products, and shipping containers. They also supply packaging to agricultural producers, food processors, pharmaceutical companies, hygiene product manufacturers, grocers, and other retailers. Our industry remains committed to meeting the needs of its

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customers and the public. Disruptions in the availability of these goods would cause significant hardships throughout our country and the world.

AF&PA members take workforce safety, and the safety of our customers, very seriously. Experts have advised that the primary route of exposure to coronavirus is direct person-to-person contact. Our members have taken steps to protect their workforce and to help their customers address current challenges. However, the operation of manufacturing facilities, including mills and converting plants, cannot be done remotely and requires the day-to-day presence of highly trained employees and non-employee technical support necessary to ensure continued and safe operations of the facilities and distribution systems. This also includes ensuring access to critical supplies, including necessary manufacturing raw materials like wood fiber and recovered fiber supplied through the wood fiber supply chain and recycling systems, and transportation systems so our industry can continue to produce and deliver essential products.

All segments of society have a role to play to help limit the spread of Coronavirus and protect public health, especially those who are most vulnerable. The forest products industry plays an essential role in facilitating product safety, enhancing hygiene, and responding to COVID-19 challenges. Our industry remains committed to meeting the needs of its customers and the public, particularly in this dynamic environment.

We would be happy to provide additional information about our efforts to protect the health of our employees and communities while also continuing to produce essential materials to the American medical community and the American public during this trying time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heidi Brock". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heidi Brock  
President & CEO

CC: United States Governors