



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Charles D. Baker, Governor ♦ Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor ♦ Jennifer D. Maddox, Undersecretary

PHN 2020-10

To: All Local Housing Authorities

From: Ben Stone, Associate Director, Division of Public Housing

Re: Capital Projects Guidance for Housing Authorities during COVID-19 Emergency

Date: March 19, 2020

This guidance inform LHAs that wish to continue with capital projects how to do so in a manner consistent with social distancing that maximizes safety for all concerned. DHCD's interest is to maintain some level of economic activity and capital preservation work without unnecessarily risking transmission of COVID-19. If an LHA is not comfortable moving forward with construction projects during this emergency period, DHCD will support that decision.

Design

This guidance applies to LHAs and Design Consultants (DCs) that are working together on the design phase of an active project. In all instances, the allowance of DCs onto LHA property is at the discretion of the LHA and with consideration for the comfort level of the DC. If both parties agree to move forward, please consider the following guidance:

DCs may continue working on design projects as their workplaces allow. All site visits to occupied units and to unoccupied interior spaces that are not directly accessible from the exterior will be **ceased and deferred** to a later date. Site visits to properties for exterior work or unoccupied interior spaces that *are* directly accessible from the exterior are permitted, at the discretion of both parties. Any design meetings required for work to continue should be conducted via teleconference or email.

If a work order or design project cannot be completed without a site visit to restricted areas, please contact Simone Early to discuss deferment and schedule revision. You can reach Simone simone.early@mass.gov

NOTE: Unoccupied interior spaces that are not directly accessible from the exterior include: community rooms or mechanical rooms that must be entered from an internal hallway. If the unoccupied space has a direct egress from the exterior and can be accessed without entering internal hallways, site visits may proceed.

Bidding

For the time being, we are recommending postponement of the bidding process for all projects involving occupied units or unoccupied interior spaces that are not directly accessible from the exterior. This is to

eliminate the required walkthroughs that must be posted with bid sets. While attending a walkthrough is not required, offering one is. We recommend that the bidding process may continue on exterior projects and unoccupied interior spaces that are directly accessible from the exterior. We also recommend making the walkthrough by appointment only, to reduce the possibility of crowds. LHA staff should maintain social distancing protocols with any outside contractors when administering the walk-throughs

Please check in with your DHCD Project Manager and DHCD Director of Procurement and Construction Management, David McClave at david.mcclave@mass.gov if you are unsure if your project's bidding should be postponed.

Construction

This guidance applies to LHAs, General Contractors (GC) and DCs that are working together on projects that are either actively or soon-to-be under construction. In all instances, the allowance of construction staff onto LHA property is at the discretion of the LHA and with consideration for the comfort level of the crew. If both parties agree to move forward, refer to the below guidance:

DHCD recommends that all **projects in occupied units** and unoccupied interior spaces that are not directly accessible from the exterior be **postponed**, unless the project is addressing an emergency. Emergencies include, but are not limited to: failing building systems, active water infiltration of any kind, and items which may impact the health and/or safety of your residents. We recommend that exterior projects and those in unoccupied interior spaces that *are* directly accessible from the exterior are **permitted**, at the discretion of both parties.

LHAs should conduct any construction or kick-off meetings required for work to continue via teleconference or email, to the extent possible.

If you have an executed construction contract but need to delay the work, please note that our template construction contracts allow the Owner to suspend work for up to 15 days with no cost. After that point, the GC needs to request a change order to account for the time delay. The GC cannot take overhead and profit on that additional cost. **DHCD Emergency Reserve Funds will cover these change orders.** The LHA should contact their DHCD Construction Advisor to discuss change orders for delays and allow the GC to pursue submitting it on their own.

LHAs, GCs and DCs should note that whatever restrictions the municipality has given will supersede DHCD's guidance. To date, the city of Boston has suspended all construction activity within the city until further notice.

Please contact your DHCD Construction Advisor or DHCD Construction Management Unit Supervisor Bill Miller at William.m.miller@mass.gov with questions.

NOTE: The deadline for construction completion and reimbursement on projects with a FY20 Health and Safety award will be extended from June 30, 2020 to September 30, 2020.