



May 13, 2020

Governor Tony Evers
115 East, State Capitol
Madison WI 53702

Governor Evers,

I am writing you as the President of NARI of Madison (the Madison Chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry) to express concerns on behalf of our members, and to share some ideas which would make us all proud as we attempt to adapt safely to the COVID Pandemic in the Madison area. NARI is a non-partisan, politically diverse, association of businesses affiliated with the remodeling industry, who promote professionalism in our industry, consumer education, and a strong code of ethics. NARI advocated for contractor licensing long before Wisconsin finally adopted it, and NARI was supportive of the lead-safe standards that have been adopted, to protect the health and safety of our workforce and our clients, who are homeowners.

We believe that the professionals at NARI, and in particular Lead-Safe Renovators, are best equipped to confront the new normal. We are uniquely well prepared to help chart a thoughtful and responsible path during the COVID-19 crisis, and **we welcome the opportunity to be a partner** in formulating the best practices as we seek to restart economic activity which is responsible for the workers, homeowners, and inspectors who are engaged in remodeling. **We are asking that any project with a good COVID plan be considered for permit approval, immediately. We include a list of standards which we believe will help us all to begin to remodel again.**

We have tremendous respect for the professionals in the Building Inspection division, particularly in Madison. These individuals know the companies who strive for excellence, and understand the importance of Lead-Safe renovation practices, since remodeling poses many more risks, to workers and homeowners, beyond the standard workplace safety hazards of general construction.



Lead Safe renovators understand risk management with respect to airborne contaminants, and we routinely isolate hazards from our workers, and from our occupants/ clients/ homeowners. We typically create a plastic bubble which isolates the workspace from the occupant space, using zip walls, air scrubbers, and other tools that are necessary to perform Lead-Safe renovations. **These types of procedures are exactly what we need to be doing in the coming months, as we emerge from and manage this health threat.** The COVID virus is a challenging threat, but it is also just another hazard that we are accustomed to managing.

To that end, many of us are looking at critical criteria to determine how to prioritize projects. Here is a list of COVID Safe conditions which, in our experience, are most important in determining if a project a good candidate to renovate during the COVID Pandemic.

1. **Is the applicant a certified Lead-Safe Renovator?**
2. **Is the home occupied?** If not, this project is ideal, since we can control every aspect of human interaction. These projects become similar to new construction, EXCEPT, if managed by a Lead Safe renovator, we would expect the level of safety protocols to be even better.
3. **Is the renovation mostly on the exterior of the home?** This would include siding, roofing, deck and porch additions. These are much safer. Each worker still needs to follow personal and workplace safety protocols, for COVID.
4. **If the home is occupied, can the project be completely isolated from the living space?** Almost any addition to a home is a good potential candidate.
5. **Can the contractor establish a separate worker entrance?** If so, this is ideal. Most additions qualify, but many interior remodels can be connected to a unique entrance/ egress that minimizes contact between the work area, and the occupants. If not, our protocol has us clean shared knobs and other touch surfaces every 2 hours, if not more often.
6. **Can the project be safely performed, minimizing contact between workers?** Some projects (such as a small bathroom remodel) are too small to allow more than one worker on site at a time. But if a project can proceed safely with only one worker at a time, why would the city prevent that from happening?
7. **Is the contractor willing to facilitate a verified video inspection on the jobsite, if requested?** Many communities in the area are allowing some Facetime and other video inspection formats. If verification is a concern, some communities (in the



Washington, DC area, for example) require the inspector to drive to the site, call the contractor, wave at each other, and then have the contractor go in with the video call in progress, to show and explain the project fully in real time. Our point here is that a little inconvenience IS MUCH PREFERRED to the inability to continue to work in a safe manner.

8. **What if none of the above conditions apply?** Some projects are too intrusive in the occupied home to consider performing at this time.

To summarize: Contractors would submit a “COVID Safety Checklist” with any project set submitted for permit. All the conditions which apply would be attested to by the applicant, allowing the City to weigh the relative safety of each project.

We believe that Madison, and every municipality, is best served by helping to ensure that any economic activity is prudent, safe, and competently managed as we start to emerge from the “safer at home” order. I am proud of the response of the overwhelming majority of NARI contractors to the COVID crisis. **Currently, the policies of the City of Madison seem to inconsistently penalize the good actors operating under the safest health protocols in the construction industry**, while allowing the opponents of regulation to carry on with business as usual. **I am confident that the City of Madison does not want that outcome.** As a former Alder in Monona, I am confident that local government and business can find a way to work together, for the health, safety, and rebuilding of our community. NARI of Madison welcomes the opportunity to be a good-faith partner, to help create sensible and enforceable guidelines to allow COVID Safe renovations to continue, for the sake of all of the stakeholders in our community.

Respectfully submitted,

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President, NARI of Madison

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cc: Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway; Matthew Wachter, Director of DPCED; George Hank, Director of Building Inspection



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NARI Members in Support of this Letter:

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