“Essential Business” Designation During COVID-19

During the COVID-19 Coronavirus outbreak, several local governments and the state have issued various orders regarding exposure controls.

The Board has received numerous requests for a document stating that plumbing, HVAC, fuel piping and sprinkler contractors are considered as “essential” businesses or services. It is not within the statutory authority of the licensing boards to determine who or what is essential. That power and responsibility lies with elected officials.

On Friday, March 27th, Governor Cooper issued Executive Order 121, also known as the Statewide Stay at Home Order. The order takes effect at 5:00 pm on Monday, March 30, 2020. The entire order can be viewed by clicking here.

Below are two excerpts from the Order that appear to apply to plumbing, HVAC, fuel gas piping and fire sprinkler contractors:

**Section 2. COVID-19 Essential Businesses and Operations**

15. Critical trades: Building and construction tradesmen and tradeswomen, and other trades, including but no limited to, plumbing, electricians, exterminators, cleaning and janitorial staff for commercial and governmental properties, security staff, operating engineers, HVAC, painting, cleaning services, moving and relocation services, landscaping and other service providers who provided services that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation and essential operation of residences and COVID-19 Essential Businesses and Operations. This includes organizations that represent employees.

**Section 7. Effective Date**

This Executive Order is effective Monday, March 30, 2020, at 5:00 pm, and shall remain in effect for thirty (30) days from that date or unless repealed, replaced or rescinded by another applicable Executive Order. An Executive Order rescinding the Declaration of the State of Emergency will automatically rescind this Executive Order.