



American Welding Society®

Welding & Cutting Companies are “Essential Businesses”

March 23, 2020 – As states grapple with COVID-19 mitigation, questions have immediately arisen as to whether certain companies are considered "essential businesses." The American Welding Society (AWS), its nearly 70,000 individual and 2,500 corporate members, and key welding and cutting stakeholders deem that businesses in the welding and cutting industry are considered "essential businesses" when considering that non-essential facilities are asked to close or repurpose due to COVID-19.

Workers in the welding and cutting industry provide essential repair and maintenance of key infrastructure, play a critical role in protecting the health and safety of patients through medical grade devices, and serve as trusted members of the nationwide community in disaster situations through the use of equipment necessary to produce critical medical equipment, such as hospital beds, CT scanners and X-Ray machines, in addition to the manufacture and delivery of medical gases (e.g. oxygen).

Last week, risk mitigation strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19 were announced by the [federal](#) government, and many state and local governments. Welding and cutting businesses and the products they provide are critical to public safety and health and should be designated as "essential businesses," in line with other medical equipment manufacturers, distribution centers and others. **We urge all authorities to designate welding and cutting equipment businesses as “essential businesses.”**

Welding and cutting businesses provide the following essential products to the following industries:

- 1. Medical** –welding equipment and consumables are used in the production of medical equipment, such as hospital beds, CT scanners, X-Ray machines, etc. Gas equipment and consumables are used for the regulation and distribution of key medical gases, such as oxygen.
- 2. Utilities / Construction** – welding equipment and consumables are used in the repair and maintenance of key utility and construction infrastructure, such as electrical power plants, bridges, buildings and waste-water treatment facilities, essential to the health and wellbeing of humans.
- 3. Security** – welding equipment and consumables are essential elements of providing military, police, fire and EMS equipment, such as fire trucks, ambulances, cruisers and heavy equipment.



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4. **Agriculture** – welding equipment and consumables are key elements in the production and maintenance of food producing equipment for farmers, such as harvesters, planters, tillers and fertilizing equipment.
5. **Hardware Stores** – equipment and consumables are key supplies for homeowners to keep plumbing and emergency electrical systems functioning.
6. **Plumbers** – equipment and consumables are key supplies for personnel to keep residences operating properly.
7. **Auto Repair** – equipment and consumables are used in the repair of transportation vehicles (cars, trucks and busses), essential to keeping them on the road.
8. **HVAC Systems** – equipment and consumables are essential in the repair and supply of HVAC systems that keep living spaces regulated and sanitary for human beings.

For these reasons, we urge lawmakers and state executives to protect and preserve public safety and health and ensure that welding and cutting businesses are clearly stated to be "essential businesses," and thereby allowed to continue to provide critical products that support our communities in the months and years to come.

Sincerely,

Ray W. Shook
Executive Director
American Welding Society