

BizFed Bounce Back



BizFed members share stories of resilience.

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In the face of COVID19, BizFed members bounce back with perseverance, creativity and resourcefulness.

METAL INDUSTRY SEES CORONA COMING, TAKES DEMAND HIT

Regular trade with countries like China gave the California metal industry the foresight to prepare for the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent shutdown even as the pandemic caught many lawmakers flatfooted.

California is home to approximately 4,000 metalworking facilities, which employs more than 350,000 Californians. The California Metals Coalition represents a broad swath of the industry.

Like many industries, 2020 was shaping up to be a good year for manufacturing. But around January, signs that the coronavirus ravaging China would come to the U.S., even as the wave of factory shutdowns in China temporarily benefited American companies.

"By the time January and February hit, we saw the Coronavirus would hit the U.S.," said James Simonelli, Executive Director of the California Metals Coalition. "That's when we started to lose optimism and predicted we'd go through a similar shutdown."

Having seen the epidemic coming, the coalition quickly seized the opportunity to help first responders by teaming up with the MiraCosta College Technology Career Institute begin assembling and distributing decontamination kits that include an environmentally-friendly, ultraviolet germicide that can quickly

treat and extend the life of PPE within minutes.

Essential Is Not Always Thriving

Coalition members were largely considered essential during the shutdowns, being makers of components for so many products, including airplanes as well as medical supplies, like ventilators.

But even as manufacturers stayed open, demand decreased, which hurt production. As consumers stopped doing routine activities like flying, traveling and buying new homes, demand for essential parts slowed down.

"What happened was a chain reaction," Simonelli said. "For example, people stopped flying, companies like Boeing weren't building as many planes and then affected us. Every type of company making an aerospace part saw an immediate hit. There was still business happening, but definitely an abbreviated amount."

Adapting To A Post-COVID World

Like everyone else, the manufacturing industry is learning to live in a post-COVID world. Additional safety precautions have been taken to protect employees and customers from spreading the virus.

But much of day-to-day business was conducted in person. Telemeeting apps



James Simonelli - Executive Director, California Metals Coalition

can do a lot, but it's hard to replicate in a virtual setting the experience of going over blueprints in person. In many respects, the industry was already heading in this direction, but COVID-19 has accelerated the process and forced businesses to adopt changes sooner than expected.

"Everyone will have to become more advanced quickly," Simonelli said. "But the industry was moving in that direction anyway, so maybe it's not that big of change--it will just be drastic at first."



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