



POSITION

MARCH 2020

## COVID-19 AND CONTINUOUS MANUFACTURING

*Ensured continued manufacturing of European glass fibre products*

As the EU confronts the current public health crisis related to the coronavirus (COVID-19), the undersigned companies active in the glass fibre industry write to express our strong concerns with respect to State and local regulations governing “essential businesses” and “essential workers” during this critical time. As explained below, **glass fibre manufacturing is critical to both surviving the pandemic and achieving the economic recovery after the pandemic passes.**

We are aware that States and municipalities across Europe are responding to the current crisis by issuing, and frequently revising, emergency orders and/or guidance that may threaten the ability of the glass fibre industry to operate and aid in the response to COVID-19. Given the multiple orders from different countries and sub-national jurisdictions that may contain different (and potentially conflicting) rules, we **recommend your administration quickly issue clear guidance that clarifies essential businesses, services and workers, and that this guidance recognize the important role of the glass fibre industry in protecting all our communities, families and employees.**

The European glass fibre industry, including manufacturers, distributors, and related industries is an essential industry sector. We provide critical materials and services to ensure the manufacturing and availability of a broad variety of products from building products, including those necessary to maintain buildings where people are isolating themselves, and key materials for the polymer producers, including polymers that go into medical equipment necessary to fight the virus and other serious health conditions. **The industry is integral to the infrastructure that will enable Europe to get through our current challenging times and help the economy rebound quickly.** The products we make are key for the food industry, health care providers, air filtration producers, renewable energy industry and many types of producers of polymer products from automotive to household goods.

The key assets of our industry are glass melting furnaces that operate at extremely high temperature. While many manufacturing processes are well suited to intermittent operation, glass fibre manufacturing requires steady state, continuous operation. Furnace shutdowns are typically done roughly every 7 to 10 years in anticipation of complete rebuilds. Even these planned shutdowns require careful planning and execution to prevent the risk of injury to employees. **Unplanned shutdowns can dramatically increase risk of injury to employees due to the nature of the process and impose significant costs on manufacturers through lost production and potential damage to furnaces.**

Further, these manufacturing activities are essential to ensure that the economy can quickly recover when the pandemic passes. **Stopping production of these materials now will lead to shortages after the pandemic when they will be most needed for the recovery** and such production curtailments would make it more difficult to resume production later. Once shut down, these glass melting furnaces must often be either repaired or rebuilt before restarting and the **lead times for materials necessary for restart/rebuild are 6-12 months, at a minimum in normal times.** This would effectively cause our operations to shut down for a similar or greater time period. Because the manufacturers of the key materials to rebuild a glass melting furnace have limited capacity, an EU wide shut down of the glass industry would, in our opinion, be devastating for those companies and their employees that are directly impacted and for the related supply chain

Given the nature of our production processes and the likelihood that the cessation of the manufacture of glass fibre products will adversely impact a critical supply chain, we regard the glass fibre industry as essential in order to with get through this difficult period and for the recovery of our society after the crisis.

Further **all glass fibre manufacturing companies are taking significant measures to protect their employees and the communities in which we live and do business.** In contrast to recreational and

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other public services, we are not open to the public and the work in our large plants can be conducted with adequate social distancing protocols. We have implemented enhanced cleaning and disinfecting in all of our facilities and restricted access to third parties. We have sent employees home who are able to work from home and we all have robust pandemic plans in place.

We greatly appreciate your consideration and we look forward to our continuing service to our economies.

***About Glass Fibre Europe – EU Transparency Register n°635608817518-09.***

*Glass Fibre Europe, founded in 1987, is the voice of the European continuous filament glass fibre industry. The continuous filament glass fibre industry is the cornerstone of the glass-based composite materials and technical textiles value-chains. Glass fibre's unique properties enable the production of wind energy, electric and electronic devices, and the development of sustainable solutions in a wide range of applications, such as transport and construction. Glass Fibre Europe is composed of 7 companies: 3B the fibreglass company, FYSOL SAS, Johns Manville, Lanxess, Nippon Electric Glass, Owens Corning and Saint-Gobain Vetrotex.*