

Technology & Maintenance Council



Turning Experience Into Practice

Impacts of COVID-19 on Maintenance Operations of Fleets and Service Providers: Results From Survey 3 (August 28, 2020)

Developed by ATA's Technology & Maintenance Council (TMC)

ABSTRACT

ATA's Technology & Maintenance Council (TMC) conducted this third survey to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic upon the maintenance operations of fleets and service providers, as a follow-on to the two prior assessments made in March and April, 2020. This survey, conducted in mid-August, investigated current and anticipated impacts in the areas of technician labor force readiness and in commercial vehicle parts supply chains. The survey found that despite a dramatic increase in cases over time, actual average impacts in both the shop labor force and parts/equipment availability areas remained relatively minor across the three surveys. Shop support supplies deliveries are improving in the current time frame and are now also minor. Expectations for the next 30-day period are for impacts on all labor force criteria continue to be minor. Adverse impacts on supply chain categories are expected to be at the same minor levels currently being experienced. The ability to recruit, hire and train new or replacement technicians continues with moderate disruptions being encountered, as was reported in the first two surveys. This survey also summarize COVID-19 related policies and procedures which are in place for nearly all of the respondents.

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INTRODUCTION

ATA's Technology & Maintenance Council (TMC) conducted its third survey regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic upon maintenance operations for commercial vehicles. TMC's first survey was conducted at the end of March 2020, and repeated in at the end of April 2020. TMC continues to assess whether these impacts pose a threat to trucking operations and the industry's ability to continue to deliver both critical medical supplies to the health care industry, as well as life-sustaining provisions for the general public during a time when business restrictions and even city, regional or statewide lock downs are in effect.

This survey seeks to evaluate whether trucking operations are currently or potentially jeopardized by an inability to sustain fleet and service provider shops to keep commercial vehicles in safe operating condition.

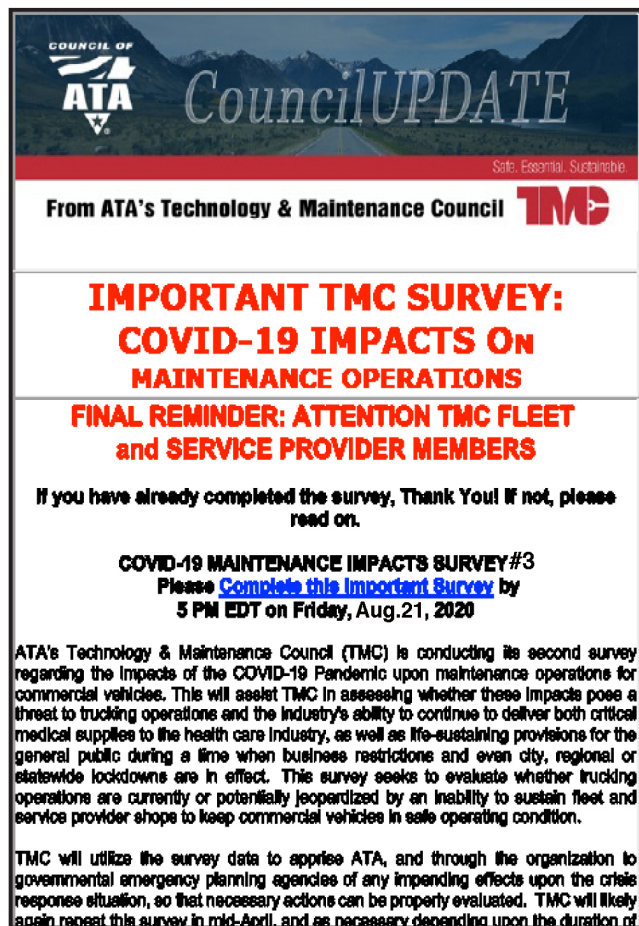


Figure 1

TMC will utilize the survey data to apprise ATA, and through the organization to governmental emergency planning agencies of any impending effects upon the crisis response situation, so that necessary actions can be properly evaluated. TMC may repeat this survey as necessary depending upon the duration of this crisis.

The survey posed questions regarding whether a fleet or service provider has experienced confirmed exposures or cases of infections by the COVID-19 virus, the effects upon the organization's technician workforce availability and if the supply chains providing parts and supplies to sustain these maintenance operations are currently being compromised. The survey also asks for the organization's projections on impacts over the next 30 days.

In this survey, TMC also queried its members regarding whether they had implemented COVID-19 related policies and procedures and the general nature of these procedures. TMC also inquired as to whether or not business visitors were being permitted in the facility or in the shop, and if specific protocols were being implemented for business visitors.

TMC requested that only one survey be submitted per company, by the primary TMC member contact or the best person to respond for that organization. All responses will be kept strictly confidential and only aggregated results are reported herein. Respondents were given the option of providing contact information for follow-up or answering anonymously.

METHODOLOGY

Survey alerts were sent via e-mail (see Figure 1) to primary fleet and service provider TMC member contacts. The survey was conducted using Survey Monkey. Eblast alerts were generated using the Adestra e-mail management system. The survey was activated on August 13, 2020, and closed August 28, 2020.

RESULTS

Twenty unique completed responses were submitted by fleets and service providers. The sample varied from small to large, and included local, regional and national scope organizations. The summary responses to the survey questions are as follows:

DEMOGRAPHICS

The first set of questions identified organizational demographics.

Company Operational Types	Percent	Number
Private Carrier (For Hire)	40%	8
Vocational	15%	3
Intermodal	0%	0
Leasing (full service)	5%	1
Truckload	25%	5
Less-Than-Truckload	0%	0
Pickup & Delivery	0%	0
Service Provider	25%	5

Areas of Operations	Percent	Number
Nationally	30%	6
Northeast	15%	7
Northwest	5%	1
Mid-Atlantic	30%	6
Midwest	40%	8
Southeast	35%	7
South Central	20%	4
Southwest (Including Hawaii)	10%	2
Alaska	0.00%	0
Canada	5%	1
Mexico	2.63%	0

(NOTE: several respondents reported multiple operational areas)

Fleet Size

Approximately 15 percent operate between 50 and 100 vehicles, 35 percent operate between 100 and 500 vehicles, 25 percent operate between 500 and 1,000 vehicles, and 25 percent operate over 1,000 vehicles.

Maintenance Operations

70 percent of the respondents conducted maintenance operations with both inside and contract shops, 20 percent conducted maintenance at exclusively in-house facilities and only five percent contracted all maintenance to outside facilities. Of note here is that even service provider companies assign at least some of their work to third parties.

Disaster Planning






About 40 percent of the respondents confirmed that they have formal maintenance operational disaster mitigation plans similar to the guidance provided in TMC RP 537, *Disaster Recovery for Vehicle Maintenance Operations*. 60 percent did not.

WORKFORCE IMPACTS

The survey then asked a series of questions regarding impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic upon maintenance operations' labor force, both in the current time frame (mid-August 2020), and how the respondent projected those impacts changing over the next 30 days.

COVID-19 Case Experience

Of the responding organizations:

- 2 (11 percent) reported no employee exposures (47 percent in Survey #2).

- 5 (26 percent) reported exposures or suspicions of exposure outside the workplace (16 percent in Survey #2).

- 5 (26 percent) reported exposures or suspicions of exposure inside the workplace (5 percent in Survey #2).

- 6 (32 percent) reported a confirmed, but asymptomatic COVID-19 diagnosis (11 percent in Survey #2).

- 13 (68 percent) reported a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis with symptoms (18 percent in Survey #2).


These are a much higher percentage of cases than in the previous surveys.

Current COVID-19 Impacts on In-House Maintenance Labor Force Availability

Full Time Technicians

- Five reported no impact
- 13 reported minor impact
- None reported moderate impact

- None reported severe impact

Part-Time or Contract Technicians

- 14 reported no impact
- Four reported minor impact
- None reported moderate impact
- None reported severe impact

Maintenance Supervisors

- 15 reported no impact
- Three reported minor impact
- None reported moderate impact
- None reported severe impact

Maintenance Managers/Execs

- 12 reported no impact
- Three reported minor impact
- None reported moderate impact
- None reported severe impact

Ability to Recruit/Hire and Train New or Replacement Technicians

- Nine reported no impact
- Three reported minor impact
- Five reported moderate impact
- One reported severe impact

September 2020 Projections of COVID-19 Impacts on In-House Maintenance Labor Force Availability

Full Time Technicians

- Six project no impact
- 10 project minor impact
- Two project moderate impact
- Eight projects severe impact

Part-Time or Contract Technicians

- 13 project no impact
- Three project minor impact
- One projects moderate impact
- None project severe impact

Maintenance Supervisors

- 13 project no impact
- Five project minor impact
- None project moderate impact

- None project severe impact

Maintenance Managers/Execs

- 11 project no impact
- Six project minor impact
- One projects moderate impact
- None project severe impact

Current COVID-19 Impacts on Outside (Third-Party) Maintenance Availability

- 10 reported no impact
- Six reported minor impact
- Two reported moderate impact
- None reported severe impact

September 2020 Projections of COVID-19 Impacts on Outside (Third-Party) Maintenance Availability

- Nine project no impact
- Six project minor impact
- Three project moderate impact
- None project severe impact

SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACTS

This survey then asked a series of questions regarding impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic upon deliveries of fleet equipment and parts (including fuels and lubricants), as well as deliveries of shop support supplies (uniforms, gloves, cleaning supplies, etc.). The question was posed in the current time frame (end of April, 2020), and how those impacts are projected to change over the next 30 days.

Current COVID-19 Impacts on Deliveries of Fleet Equipment and Parts (Including Fuels and Lubricants)

- Six reported no impact
- Nine reported minor impact
- Three reported moderate impact
- None reported severe impact

September 2020 Projections of COVID-19 Impacts On Deliveries Of Fleet Equipment And Parts (Including Fuels And Lubricants)

- Seven projects no impact
- Eight project minor impact

- Three project moderate impact
- None project severe impact

Current COVID-19 Impacts On Shop Support Supplies (Uniforms, Gloves, Cleaning Supplies, etc.)

- Seven reported no impact
- Nine reported minor impact
- Two reported moderate impact
- None reported severe impact

September 2020 Projections of COVID-19 Impacts On Shop Support Supplies (Uniforms, Gloves, Cleaning Supplies, Etc.)

- Seven project no impact
- Nine project minor impact
- Two project moderate impact
- None project severe impact

WEIGHTED SCORING OF SURVEY RESPONSES

In order to more readily assess the risk to continuation of effective commercial vehicle fleet maintenance, the responses to each of the survey factors presented with respect to their weighted averages in **Table 1**.

Weighting is assigned as follows:

- "No Impact" = 0
- "Minor Impact" = 1
- "Moderate Impact" = 3
- "Severe Impact" = 5

COVID-19 RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

For this survey TMC added questions regarding various policies and procedures that the respondent's company had in place to address COVID-19 concerns in the maintenance facility environment. Members were also polled as to their policies regarding business visitors in the facility and shop.

Written Procedures

All but one of the respondents reported that their company had written COVID-19 related policies and procedures. 40% stated that there

**TABLE 1: WEIGHTED AVERAGES FOR CUMULATIVE SURVEY RESPONSES
EVALUATION DATE – AUGUST 28, 2020**

Evaluation Factor	Current Impact	Projected Impact in Surveys 2/1	Projected (30-Day) Impact
Labor Factors			
In-house Maintenance Labor Force - Full Time Technicians	0.72	0.70 / 0.69	0.89
In-house Maintenance Labor Force - Part Time Technicians	0.22	0.54 / 0.34	0.35
In-house Maintenance Labor Force - Maintenance Supervisors	0.17	0.42 / 0.34	0.28
In-house Maintenance Labor Force - Maintenance Managers/Execs	0.67	0.62 / 0.70	0.50
Ability to Recruit/Hire and Train Technicians	1.28	1.76 / 1.85	N/A
Impacts on Outside (Third-Party) Maintenance Availability	0.67	1.28 / 0.89	0.83
Supply Chain Factors			
Deliveries Of Fleet Equipment And Parts	1.00	1.76 / 1.10	0.94
Deliveries Of Shop Support Supplies	0.83	1.30 / 1.92	0.83
Impact Index: 0 = None, 1= Minor, 3 = Moderate, 5 = Severe			

were maintenance shop specific policies and procedures in addition to their company's general written procedures.

Sixty-seven percent of the written plans include general procedures for all employees. Twenty-eight percent also provide specific procedures by operation (e.g. shop, yard, warehouse, etc). One respondent's plan also details specific procedures by job description (e.g. technician, supervisor, management, driver, etc.).

Contact Tracing

Two-thirds of the respondents have a contact tracing protocol. Of these only one utilizes an mobile app or computer-based system for this purpose. All others use paper-based methods.

Business Visitors

Pre-Visit Access Permissions/Checks

- 76 percent (13) on a case by case basis.
- 24 percent (4) only where "hands-on" or "face-to-face" is necessary.
- 12 percent (2) require authorization by supervision/management.
- 24 percent (4) Question visitors regarding potential COVID-19 symptoms/exposure.
- One required documentation of each visit.
- None required verification from the visitor's employer that COVID-19 procedures or training was provided.

On-site Requirements for Visitors

- 39 percent (7) require temperature/symptoms check on entry.

- 56 percent (10) provide written or oral instructions to visitors regarding company procedures.
- 66 percent (12) require personal protective equipment (PPE - masks, gloves, shields as appropriate) be worn by visitors.
- Two require that visitors clean and sanitize their own tools and equipment.
- Two require that visitors dispose of their own waste materials off-site.
- None permit use of the company's bays, tools and equipment by visitors.
- None will permit handling of waste materials generated by visitors.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey found that in time frame of mid-August 2020, actual average impacts in both the shop labor force and parts/equipment availability areas continue to be minor overall and when compared to the previous survey. Shop support supplies deliveries have improved from moderately impacted to only a minor impact. These actual experiences were significantly less severe than the impacts pro-

jected by the respondents in the last survey.

Expectations for the next 30-day period remain consistent with the current actual experience, that is to say minor impacts in availability across all labor force categories.

Supply chain categories are expected to be impacted at the minor levels currently being experienced for parts and equipment, and continuing decreased impacts for shop supplies at a minor level. This represents significantly decreasing levels of concern relative to what was expressed in the first two surveys.

The ability to recruit, hire and train new or replacement technicians continues to be a challenge, with moderate disruptions currently being encountered, which is the same level reported in the first two surveys.

Near all companies responding to the survey have instituted COVID-19 specific written policies and procedures. Most will permit business visitors into their facilities.