

Team South Carolina  
Division of Procurement Services  
COVID 19

After the Governor declared a State of Emergency on March 13, 2020 we quickly realized that smaller purchases and drop shipments of PPE and other supplies were not feasible in the current environment. Based on experience with receipt and distribution of water and food supplies during previous hurricane events, SCEMD and the Division worked closely to establish and supply a PPE Warehouse which would be used to receive and distribute product across the State. The PPE warehouse location was identified, staffed, and began receiving deliveries by March 27, two weeks after the State of Emergency was declared. PPE purchases for the warehouse included 2,374,845 N95 masks, 3,542, 975 surgical masks, 812,514 units of eye protection, 9,966,581 surgical gloves, and 2,588,446 hospital gowns and protective suits. The State has utilized this warehouse to provide PPE to state and local authorities as well as to support several critical missions during this event. The critical missions included:

- SC Election Commission Support - Primary Elections were held as scheduled on June 9. Supplies such as face shields, gloves, disinfecting wipes, masks, and cotton swabs were sourced and provided to supply 2261 voting precincts across the state. In all 767,187 ballots were successfully cast.
- SC Department of Social Services – Coordination of delivery of PPE and cleaning supplies to 740 childcare centers across the State. This was a vital mission for these facilities to reopen and maintain operations in order to provide childcare for essential workers.
- Return to Work Project – The State is currently in Phase 2 of a three phase Return to Work Project. Our office has coordinated with EMD, DOT, and the Department of Administration to provide face shields, protective eyewear, masks, hand soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, disinfecting wipes, gloves, and plexiglass dividers to 76 state agencies in an effort to return staff to the workplace safely.

Based in part on the success of the PPE Warehouse, the SC Legislature has authorized the establishment of a statewide stockpile, which includes a 28-day supply of PPE, to be managed by EMD in consultation with the State Fiscal Accountability Authority.

Another challenge was the volume of “offers to help” from the vendor community. This is a common occurrence during an emergency; however, there was (and still is) an exponential increase in the volume of these offers in this event. These offers were received by government procurement officials across the state as well as by medical facilities (hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, etc.). In normal circumstances, we would rely on existing contract vendors which have already been through a responsibility check. However, due to circumstances surrounding the pandemic, we were forced to utilize alternate suppliers. Many of the vendors who reached out were unknown to our staff or were newly formed. Our office partnered with the SC Hospital Association to set-up a program to collect and vet information from these vendors. Our Business Operations Staff were trained to perform high-level verifications on all vendors offering pandemic-related supplies and services. This included searching the SAM.gov website, various Secretary of State websites, and the Dun & Bradstreet website for reports and findings. Information was consolidated into a spreadsheet published on the Division’s website for use by the public. Currently, 549 vendors have been reviewed and added to our listing. By having this information consolidated into a single location, agencies have been able to streamline their sourcing processes and have identified suppliers that could meet their needs.