



November 17-18 | Digital Event

## AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH:



**Ron Vokoun**  
Project Director  
**Fluor**

### **There has been an increased demand for data centers in recent months, how has this affected the work you are doing at Fluor? What challenges have arisen with this increased urgency?**

There has certainly been pressure to deliver on our current projects. This has brought about a tremendous amount of creativity from our teams to ensure that we are moving forward safely and productively despite the challenges that coronavirus has presented on a global scale.

The challenges we face are the same as most contractors: we are trying to deliver projects at faster rates while ensuring construction workers safety. Social distancing can be difficult depending on the type of spaces that workers are in. Another challenge we have encountered in Europe was with traveling workers. Each country has its own entry and quarantine requirements – as one country opens up, another one shuts down – and so it has been challenging to maintain the desired level of labor. There have been a lot of sacrifices by our teams to keep the projects staffed and continue to build productively. In Europe, although the level of desired labor was an initial challenge, we have managed to keep labor numbers where they need to be.

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We have talked to several data center operators about our capacity to deliver on their projects globally that are being moved up from their original schedules.

### **Safety has had to be prioritized during the pandemic, yet with the increased demand, we must continue to build data centers efficiently and productively. How does Fluor maintain high levels of productivity and efficiency whilst adhering to safety guidelines?**

It has taken a lot of discipline and creativity in prioritizing safety at a time when demand is at unprecedented levels. Safety is our top priority and we have managed to maintain a high level of productivity.

One of the most impactful changes we have made is by altering the start time for the various trade contractors to enter the job site. This has reduced the congestion that typically occurs when everyone enters and leaves the jobsite at the same time.

We have also encouraged social distancing by marking the floor – at 1.5 meters in Europe and 6 feet in the US – throughout jobsites. Within our office facility, there are also constant visual reminders to socially distance.

Fluor has ensured that there are a specified maximum number of people in conference rooms. By trying to make guidelines as specific as possible, we are less likely to come up with further issues.

Safety induction meetings are limited to 10 people, which is smaller than usual on the larger jobsites, meaning the number of induction meetings has increased. But this is necessary to ensure all workers are safe.

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Break facilities are also marked for specific seating arrangements to maintain appropriate distancing.

In regards to technology, we have a safety temperature scanning device where each person entering the jobsite is tested by a thermal scanner. An alarm scans when a specific temperature is exceeded.

This is just a small list of our specific coronavirus-related techniques to keep people safe while maintaining high-productivity. Productivity rates at Fluor have remained high.

Although there was a small drop in productivity and efficiency initially, we have definitely adapted to these new ways of working and it has gone very well.

**Many construction companies have put prefabrication at the forefront to optimize productivity under safe working conditions. Has this helped Fluor implement safety procedures?**

We have seen a high interest in prefabrication and Fluor had already focused on offsite construction for data center and many other types of projects. This will probably continue to increase across organizations that were not prioritizing this construction method.

Offsite construction has several advantages without a pandemic present, but during a pandemic, these advantages are even more apparent. It's easier to engage a separate labor pool and the factory setting environment is much safer.

On traditional jobsites, more craft workers are needed, and they work in a more constrained area. All of the benefits of prefabrication apply but they definitely bring higher value during time of the pandemic.

**What do you believe are the long-term implications that Coronavirus will have on the ways of working? Has there been a shift in Fluor's strategic priorities in order to prepare for future curveballs?**

In general, I don't think working will ever go back to the way it was and different industries will find their new normal. Many companies are realizing that they don't need a physical office at all, others are realizing they don't need as much office space. Many people will work remotely on a permanent basis moving forward. Others will go to an office for specific reasons, such as meetings, but will not be there all day everyday as they did in the pre-pandemic world. An example of that is our South Carolina office, where we are creating a 'hotel' space on one of our floors where people reserve a space to work for the day but then pack up at the end of the day. This is a much better use of optimized office space on a daily basis and also makes it easier to sanitize the area without having personal belongings and paperwork covering surfaces within a typical office setting.

In regards to the jobsite, our plan is to continue moving forward with our current safety protocol until there is proof that this is no longer necessary. We are a nimble company and shift gears when necessary in order to stay aligned with the medical professionals' advice and best practices.

As one of the largest global contractors, we are very agile. Our strategy is to always meet the needs of our customers regardless of what's going on in the world. With our global resources we are uniquely positioned to do just that, even in a pandemic.

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