

# Local businesses making changes to operations

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SENECA — The COVID-19 outbreak has caused many larger companies in Oconee and Pickens counties to make changes to the way they operate, including working remotely and looking for ways to continue to operate

while minimizing potential exposure.

BASF plants in Seneca and Central are continuing to operate, but some employees are working from home, according to company spokeswoman Blythe Lamonica.

Beginning today, everyone going into BASF plants will get

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their temperatures taken through “thermal scans,” according to Lamonica. The plant has been using screening questions for COVID-19.

She added some of more than 300 employees at the Seneca site and the 62 employees in Central are working from home.

“From an operation standpoint, it’s as normal as you could have at this point,” she said. “We have stopped any non-business-critical projects. Those have been postponed, per the normal procedures that companies are doing now. We’re really trying to minimize the amount of people onsite that do not need to be there. Those folks have been asked to work from home, if possible. We are just trying to limit the access and keep those folks that are working at the site as protected as possible.”

Lamonica added BASF has been doing extra cleaning at its sites, having as many virtual meetings as possible, as well as other precautions to cut down on the impact of the virus.

“We are staggering lunch times and break times to minimize the amount of folks gath-

ered at one point,” she said.

## DUKE ENERGY

Duke Energy’s World of Energy near Seneca is closed to the public, but the Oconee Nuclear Station is operational, according to Duke spokesman Neil Nissan.

“All of our power plants are fully staffed,” Nissan said. “We just don’t have visitors, meaning people outside coming in. That’s really for the protection of the employees at the sites, but also for the visitors.”

He said employees not working onsite are still working.

“At Duke Energy we’re able to do meetings via teleconference — we have video conference capabilities,” Nissan said. “If you’re able to do your job remotely, we’re asking employees to do so. But those employees like linemen, they have a critical service, and we provide an essential service to customers, so that is business as usual.”

Disconnections for Duke customers who are late paying their power bills have been suspended.

“This is a very uncertain time — very challenging times — for a lot of people, and we don’t want to add a burden,” Nissan said.

Duke Energy technicians will continue to respond to power outages

and other emergencies and will continue to complete service orders — such as new electric connections and requested disconnections.

If technicians need to interact with customers in person in an emergency, Nissan said they will follow the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s safety guidelines, including social distancing. He added services that are not urgent or time-sensitive, but require in-person customer contact by Duke Energy employees, will be rescheduled. Duke Energy will contact customers to reschedule those appointments.

## BORGWARNER

Employee safety and health is a prime concern at BorgWarner, according to a spokesperson.

“This is a dynamic situation that is changing by the hour, by the minute,” BorgWarner marketing and public relations director Michelle Collins said. “The health and well-being of our employees is of the utmost importance to us. The company is following guidelines set by the government in the various regions in which we operate, and BorgWarner is adhering to those guidelines to ensure the safety and welfare of our employees.”