THE ALUMINUM EXTRUSION INDUSTRY PLAYS CRITICAL ROLE IN THE NATION’S SUPPLY CHAIN

Introduction

The current national and international crisis highlights just how critical it is for the United States to maintain a strong industrial manufacturing base. In this crisis the United States must continue producing the products needed to maintain and expand the Federal and State Governments ability to tackle the demands associated with confronting the coronavirus. The U.S. aluminum extrusion industry is one of the essential industries in the U.S. supply chain that will be vital in confronting the virus. In its guidelines the office of Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) identifies aluminum production and aluminum processing as part of the nation’s critical manufacturing sector. Because aluminum extrusions are a processed semi-finished aluminum product, CISA’s definition of “processed aluminum” includes aluminum extrusions. As discussed below, aluminum extrusions are key components incorporated throughout the supply chain in nearly every critical industry as defined by CISA in its guidelines.

In response to the global pandemic due to the coronavirus, 26 states have issued stay-at-home or shelter-in-place orders. Numerous other states, cities, and other municipalities have issued orders or public health directives closing non-essential businesses or limiting residents from participating in non-essential activities. Essential businesses, including the production of aluminum extrusions, must remain open to help provide critical products, including medical equipment, infrastructure, and defense technology, during this crisis. The following paper details
the critical part that aluminum extrusions play in the nation’s supply chain and why it must be understood to be an essential industry in any State or local stay to home order.

**Aluminum Extrusions and the Aluminum Extruders Council**

Aluminum extrusions are produced by forcing cylindrical aluminum billets through presses that create shapes out of the aluminum. Completed aluminum extrusion products are known as “profiles.” Profiles are extremely versatile and often machined following extrusion into a myriad of different component parts used in a wide variety of applications across many different industries. Any applications that require intricate, light weight, corrosion-resistant, parts aluminum extrusions are often the application of choice. As a result, aluminum extrusions are incorporated into an immense number of products that touch all aspects of American life.

The Aluminum Extruders Council (“AEC”) is an international trade association dedicated to advancing the effective use of aluminum extrusion in North America. The AEC represents 75% of all aluminum extrusion production in the United States, and aluminum extrusion production in the U.S. supports well over 40,000 direct production-related workers throughout the United States. While the AEC supports the national, state-wide, and regional efforts to mitigate the threat of COVID-19, we believe that the manufacturing of “processed aluminum products” done by our extruders qualifies as an essential industry within the purposes outlined by any public emergency declarations.

**Aluminum Extrusions are Critical Infrastructure**

On March 28, 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) issued further guidance in an Advisory Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19
Response. In the memorandum, CISA provides additional guidance on the definition of workers in critical infrastructure.

Workers necessary for the manufacturing of metals (including steel and aluminum), industrial minerals, semiconductors, materials and products needed for medical supply chains, and for supply chains associated with transportation, energy, communications, information technology, food and agriculture, chemical manufacturing, nuclear facilities, wood products, commodities used as fuel for power generation facilities, the operation of dams, water and wastewater treatment, processing and reprocessing of solid waste, emergency services, and the defense industrial base. Additionally, workers needed to maintain the continuity of these manufacturing functions and associated supply chains, and workers necessary to maintain a manufacturing operation in warm standby.

This additional guidance now clearly indicates that workers in the aluminum supply chain should be considered part of the critical infrastructure. In addition, CISA’s previous definition of critical manufacturing sectors includes primary metals and within primary metals aluminum and aluminum processing are included. As such, aluminum production throughout the supply chain, including aluminum extrusion, constitutes production of critical infrastructure.

Aluminum extrusions are used in almost every category of critical infrastructure identified by CISA. Of particular importance during this global public health crisis, extruded aluminum products are found in medical devices and other safety equipment necessary to sustain life. Aluminum extrusions are used in the production of ventilators, hospital beds, and emergency medical tents and field hospitals – the necessity of which are paramount during this national crisis. As shown in the chart below, 60 of the AEC’s extruders in 20 states affected by the stay-at-home orders produce medical equipment. Extrusions are also found in defense industrial equipment and weapons systems used by the United States military, whose continued production is necessary at all times and cannot not cease during this time of crisis. 44 extruders in 14 states produces extrusions that go into defense equipment. Extrusion profiles are also used
in everything from transportation equipment, engines, turbines, communications equipment, food and agriculture equipment, and equipment to support emergency services – all of which are considered critical industrial sectors.

Our Customers are Relying on Us to Continue Operations up the Supply Chain

Since our extruders supply so many producers in the critical industries identified by CISA, those customers are relying on extruders to continue to produce the extruded aluminum parts that are essential to maintaining the integrity of the entire supply chain and continue to supply national critical needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several of our member extruders’ customers have written letters to extruders stating that, because the customers produce essential manufacturing equipment, they expect their extrusion suppliers to remain in production, as well.
Given the breadth of extrusion production in the United States as indicated in the chart above, it is crucial that producers up the supply chain can rely on extruders. There are several states beyond those identified that have significant extrusion production, including Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, and Oregon. The AEC’s suppliers are committed to remaining open to provide essential products during this national crisis.

**Conclusion**

The AEC is committed to its customers and to the public health of the United States. Aluminum extrusion constitutes a critical industry, as aluminum extrusion products are used for both the production of essential medical equipment and the production of manufacturing of other products necessary for the maintenance of daily life and national security.