

# COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS DEVASTATING EFFECT

ON THE USPS AND ALL EMPLOYEES

Paul V. Hogrogian, National President



**D**ear Members:  
The terms of our 2019 National Agreement have been finalized and ratified by our membership. Copies of the contract have been mailed to all members. It was a long and tough bargaining process, but I believe that we achieved many gains and benefits for all Mail Handlers, without making any significant concessions.

The Contract Administration Department is now focusing its efforts on the implementation of the terms of the new National Agreement. These efforts include updating the Contract Interpretation Manual (CIM) to incorporate new and modified contract provisions and language, as well as adding the National Arbitrations and Step 4 agreements that were issued since the last update. I am confident that we will soon have an updated CIM.

\*\*\*

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a devastating effect on the Postal Service and all of its employees. Mail Handlers and postal workers from around the country continue to courageously perform essential federal service under the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When I reported to you on June 11, 2020, the COVID-19 reports issued by the Postal Service showed that there were 765 postal workers who were confirmed to be COVID-19 positive and 284 employees presumed to be positive for a total of 1,049 infected employees.

Since June 11, 2020, the increase in the COVID numbers was significant. The September 1, 2020 report shows 1,695 postal workers who have tested positive and another 481 employees who have been presumed to be positive for a total of 2,176 infected employees (an increase of 107%). The number of postal employees in quarantine is 3,513. Unfortunately, at least 85 postal workers have died because of COVID-19, including 4 Mail Handlers. While the numbers in the Northeast and East continue to improve or remain stable, the numbers in other parts of the country, especially in those jurisdictions where face covering and social distancing policies are not strictly enforced, are worsening. The increase in the infection rate is occurring at precisely the same time as more and more postal employees are returning to work. The availability rates in many postal installations continue to rise and stands at 78% nationwide. The pre-COVID rate was 84% and the COVID low was 70%, although certain installations showed a much lower availability rate.

**This means that this COVID crisis is far from over. There is no real end in sight. We must remain vigilant and continue to protect ourselves and our co-workers. The stabilizing of the infection rate in the Northeast and East proves that the protocols put in place work. We must continue to follow these protocols, especially those concerning social distancing and the wearing of face coverings and masks.**

Complying with these protocols will protect yourself as well as your co-workers.

Please contact your Union representatives if your facility is not following any of these protocols (Face Coverings, Supplies, Social Distancing, Stand-Up Talks, Cleanings, etc.).

NPMHU representatives continue to meet on a regular basis with their counterparts in postal management to discuss the Postal Service's response to the outbreak of the virus and to ensure that the proper protocols are in place during ever-changing circumstances. The NPMHU, as well as the APWU, NALC, and NRLCA, have been in discussions with senior Postal Management to implement a "temperature taking" process in postal installations. The NPMHU feels that as more and more postal employees are returning to work, more protections need to be put in place. Details such as procedures when an employee exceeds that threshold, return to work protocols, and privacy concerns are still being finalized. Discussions are also taking place regarding which installations will implement "temperature taking" procedures. Finalizing these details has become more complicated than expected.

Discussions with the Postal Service are also taking place regarding making COVID-19 testing available for postal employees at postal facilities. The NPMHU believes that this would be a positive step in ensuring that Mail Handlers and all postal workers are protected from the COVID-19 pandemic. More details will be provided as these discussions progress.

# JOE BIDEN *for* PRESIDENT



# WE'RE WITH JOE



The NPMHU also reached agreement with the Postal Service to further extend the following Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and policy statements until September 25, 2020:

1. Sick Leave for Dependent Care (Child Care)
2. Liberal Leave Policy
3. MHA Leave
4. Temporary MHA Exception Period
5. Temporary Extension on Step 3 and Arbitration Appeals

The MOU on the Temporary MHA Exception Period contains a provision that protects the rights of those Mail Handlers who have signed the Overtime Desired List. "The MHAs will not be used to the detriment of Mail

Handlers on the Overtime Desired List." This generally means that in those installations where temporary MHAs are hired in excess of the contractual MHA cap, the Overtime Desired List(s) should be maximized (12 hours per day/7 days per week).

The Liberal Leave Letter provides that "Leave taken for COVID-19 related reasons ... may not be cited in discipline for failing to maintain an assigned schedule under ELM 511.43."

Our Regional Directors are in constant contact with their counterparts in the Postal Area Offices to discuss COVID-19 issues. If you are aware of any violations of the protocols listed above, please bring them to the attention of your local union representatives so that they may refer them to the Regional Directors. Our Regional

Directors have been extremely successful in rectifying problems brought to their attention. However, they cannot correct a problem of which they are not aware.

\*\*\*

The USPS under new Postmaster General Louis DeJoy issued several memos outlining his "expectations and plan." These "expectations and plan" included the following:

- "Overtime will be eliminated. Again, we are paying too much in OT and it is not effective and will soon be taken off the table."
- The USPS will no longer use excessive cost to get the basic job done: "If the plants run late they will keep the mail for the next day."

The plans also included removal of mail processing equipment and the reduction of retail units.

Most processing plants are already extremely understaffed. Eliminating or even reducing overtime can only result in increased delays in the processing and delivery of mail and packages, including critical items such as prescriptions and election materials. Delaying mail and cutting services can only lead customers to seek alternate means of delivery and decrease much needed revenue.

The Postal Service is implementing these initiatives without notification, discussion, or negotiation with the NPMHU or the other postal unions. The NPMHU will fully enforce the provisions of the National Agreement and all negotiated MOUs as they apply to overtime and staffing.

After many days of non-stop media coverage and congressional attention on the Postal Service, and just days before testifying before key Senate and House Committees with jurisdiction over postal issues, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy issued a statement which included the following:

- Retail hours will not change
- Mail Processing equipment and collection boxes will remain where they are
- No mail processing facilities will be closed
- Overtime will continue to be approved as needed
- Longstanding operation initiatives that may have been put in place prior to his selection as PMG will be suspended

The above changes are only effective until after the November elections.

While on its face the Postmaster General's statement appears to be a step in the right direction, actions speak much louder than words.

The commitment that mail processing equipment will not be removed

rings hollow since the majority of over 600 mail processing machines to be removed have, in fact, already been removed. The Postmaster General testified before the Senate Committee that there are no intentions to reinstall any of the equipment that has already been removed.

The commitment that "Overtime will continue to be approved as needed" is meaningless unless the people in charge of the actual mail processing operations are given the authority to determine when overtime is necessary and to authorize such necessary overtime without waiting for approval from higher levels of management.

## While on its face the Postmaster General's statement appears to be a step in the right direction, actions speak much louder than words.

It is quite disturbing that the Postmaster General's statement did not strictly adhere to dispatch times. Trucks are now required to leave at the appointed time, without excuse, regardless of the circumstances.

The full resources of the National Office, all of its Regional Representatives, and certainly its Local Unions and representatives must continue to coordinate our efforts to preserve USPS operations, protect jobs, and maintain the great service that the American public has come to expect.

On July 21, 2020, during the first-ever virtual NPMHU nomination meeting, I was honored and humbled to be re-elected by acclamation as National President by the elected delegates to the 2020 National Convention. Also re-elected by acclamation were National-Secretary Treasurer Mike Hora and Regional Vice Presidents Lawrence Sapp (Southern), Dave Wilkin (Northeastern), and June Harris

(Central). Mail ballot elections will be held during September and October for the Eastern and Western Regional Vice President offices.

On behalf of myself and the other re-elected officers, I want to thank the delegates and the membership for the trust and confidence that they have shown in us. I am certain that the entire National Executive Board will continue to work hard, as we strive every day to represent Mail Handlers to the best of our ability.

Please read your bulletin boards and visit our website (NPMHU.org) and our mobile APP on a regular basis to obtain the latest information. We must

be vigilant about how we go about our business, but we must remain as calm as possible. We will all get through this together. Please stay safe.

If you have any questions, please contact your steward or another Union Representative.

I remain confident that through the work of our Contract Administration Department and our legal representatives, and through the hard work of our Regional, Local, and Branch representatives, we can successfully meet any and all challenges that lie before us.

In these and other endeavors, the continuing support of all Mail Handlers is very much appreciated.

Fraternally,



**Paul V. Hogrogian**  
National President