



National Postal Mail Handlers Union

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National President

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June Harris
Vice President
Central Region

John A. Gibson
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Don J. Sneesby
Vice President
Western Region

Message from President Paul Hogrogian

Brothers and Sisters,

The purpose of this message is to provide you with the latest information regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19) as it exists at the time of this writing, on March 19, 2020. Circumstances regarding this crisis are rapidly changing with new developments constantly occurring. It doesn't need to be said that this is an extremely serious situation.

There are currently 13 postal workers who are confirmed to be COVID-19 positive. NPMHU representatives have been meeting on a regular basis with their counterparts to discuss the Postal Service's response to the outbreak of the virus. Postal management has stated that they will follow the guidance of the "health experts" such as CDC and HHS. The Postal Service has put the following protocol in place in regard to the pandemic:

Employees returning from Level 3 countries (China, South Korea, Iran and most of Europe) or returning from cruises where a passenger was found to be COVID-19 positive will be told to self-quarantine for 14 days and will be paid Administrative Leave. (The CDC has updated their recommendations regarding cruise ship travel to include all cruises, not just those who had an infected passenger. The NPMHU has requested the USPS to update its protocol accordingly.)

1. Employees determined by the USPS to have been in close contact (defined as 6 feet or closer for 10 minutes or more) with another employee who has tested as COVID-19 positive will be told to self-quarantine for 14 days and will be paid Administrative Leave.
2. If employees during self-quarantine begin to exhibit symptoms of the virus, they will be forced to change their leave status to Sick Leave.
3. Those employees found to be COVID-19 positive will not be allowed to return to work for at least 14 days and will require medical documentation in order to return to work.

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4. Buildings are to be cleaned on a regular basis. (We have been receiving reports that this is not being complied with in all installations. Please contact your union representative to report facilities who are not in compliance.)
5. Stand up talks should be given on a regular, if not daily, basis. (We have received numerous reports that this is not being done. The Postmaster General has assured us that instructions will be given that ALL facilities must provide these talks regularly.)
6. Supplies (Gloves/Masks/Hand Sanitizers/Wipes) are to be made available. (A problem has arisen where some of the supplies destined for the Postal Service have justifiably been diverted to Health Care Providers. We have been assured that these supplies will be replenished as soon as possible.)

We are still early in this emergency and these protocols should change as circumstances change.

Regular Stand Up Talks should include various topics involving COVID-19 including:

1. Avoid close contact with people who are sick
2. Avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth with unwashed hands
3. Stay home when you are sick
4. Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, then throw tissue in trash
5. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
6. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
7. Use a 60-percent alcohol-based hand sanitizer
8. Practice social distancing

During our discussions with the Postmaster General and her senior staff, the NPMHU has been assured that a liberal leave policy is in effect with regard to COVID-19 related absences. Another problem that has arisen during this crisis is that of child care. An extremely large number of schools have been



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forced to close because of the outbreak of COVID-19. This has left many of our members searching for alternate child care or being forced to stay home from work. The Postal Service has assured us that liberal leave (Annual Leave/LWOP) will be granted in these situations. The NPMHU has also negotiated an MOU with the Postal Service to help address these circumstances. The MOU will allow Mail Handlers to use up to 80-hours of Sick Leave for Dependent Care (SLDC) to provide child care in the event of day care closures, school closures, or the unavailability of the child's primary care giver as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was also discussed that COVID-19 related absences should not be used as a basis for discipline.

We have also negotiated leave benefits for MHAs with regard to COVID-19 absences. This new MOU provides up to 80 hours of paid leave for each MHA's COVID-19 absences (including providing child care). This is extremely important for MHAs since they have very limited leave balances. They do not receive Sick Leave, are not eligible for Administrative Leave, and must "cash out" their Annual Leave at the end of each appointment. It was imperative that we provide MHAs with some form of wage protection in the event of COVID-19 related absences.

It is crucial that we maintain an open line of communication among the Postal Service, unions, and employees. Please read your bulletin board and visit our web site (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. Please stay safe.

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

Paul Hogrogian

President/NPMHU