



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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MITIGATION MEASURES EMPLOYED AS CORONAVIRUS SPREADS



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On Saturday, February 29, 2020, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union was notified that after extended overseas travel, a Seattle NDC employee tested positive for COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus. This was the first of several cases to follow. We have since learned of COVID-19 cases in Raleigh, NC, Westchester, NY, and Portland, OR; there will be others. These employees are being self-quarantined and will not return to their facility until cleared by local health authorities.

In consultation with the USPS, the following protocols are now in place. Employees returning from level 3 countries as identified by the CDC – to include China, Iran, South Korea, Europe (Schengen Area): Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Monaco, San Marino, Vatican City, United Kingdom and Ireland – or those 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 placed on paid administrative leave.

Employees determined by the USPS to have been in close contact (currently defined as 6 feet or closer for 10 or more minutes) with another individual who was found to be COVID-19 positive, will be told to self-quarantine for 14 days and will be placed on administrative leave. If an employee begins to show symptoms during their self-quarantine period, they will be required to change their leave to sick leave. Finally, those employees found to be COVID-19 positive will not be allowed to return to work for 14 days and will be required to provide medical certification to return to work.

These incidents, in concert with never-ending media reports of COVID-19 outbreaks in every state, has propelled this issue to the front line. On March 2, 2020, President Hogrogian, Secretary-Treasurer Hora and National CAD Representatives, along with representatives from all postal unions, met with Postmaster General Megan Brennan and senior leadership of the Postal Service to discuss countermeasures and abatement protocol to address the coronavirus

outbreak; these calls continue daily. One thing is clear: we are in the early stages of this national emergency. Protocol is largely driven by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This is an evolving situation; abatement protocols certainly may change. It is imperative to establish a reliable line of communication between the Postal Service, unions, and employees. The National Office will continue to dispatch all updated information to the field as soon as it is made available. In addition, all coronavirus related information has been consolidated on the national website at npmhu.org, under the Hot Topic tab titled *COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic Resources*.

To facilitate effective and timely communications with the field, the NPMHU has identified National CAD Representative Charles Manago as our primary point person to field queries and concerns, and to disseminate coronavirus awareness, protection, abatement, and reporting information to the field. Brother Manago can be reached by email at cmanago@npmhu.org.

On March 10, the Postal Service released their Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Influenza Plan (PIP). COVID-19 is a new virus and it appears to spread from person to person in the same manner as more familiar influenza (flu) viruses. The primary means of viral disease transmission is from a nearby infected person who coughs or sneezes, or even talks, dispersing the virus via respiratory droplets. These droplets may be directly inhaled by nearby uninfected persons or transferred when those people touch their face without washing their contaminated hands.

The 2020 Postal Service Pandemic Influenza Plan (PIP), which establishes a baseline of Postal Service policies and procedures for preparedness, response, and recovery from any infectious disease outbreak, was distributed to all Locals, and is posted at npmhu.org. In addition to the general guidance in the PIP, the Postal Service is establishing the following interim measures more specific to the COVID-19 outbreak to be taken by management and employees based upon the presence or absence of COVID-19 cases in the immediate community and among employees or their families.

The mitigation measures are based on current advice from CDC and other responsible federal agencies in order to promote the safety and health of postal employees, their family members, postal customers, and the communities serviced by the Postal Service. They are subject to change as the current COVID-19 outbreak unfolds and more knowledge is gained by federal, state, and local public health authorities in combating the spread of the outbreak, and in the treatment of those who are ill.

The CDC states that the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed, and to follow recommendations to help prevent the spread of any respiratory viruses, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Stay home when you are sick;
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue;
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces;
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable.

The National Postal Mail Handlers Union takes this pandemic seriously. We are in communications with the Postal Service on a daily basis. The USPS has committed to implementing CDC and HHS recommendations. Periodic mandatory stand-up talks will occur until unnecessary. We understand that there is a limited supply of gloves and face masks. Remember, the CDC recommendation is that face masks are unnecessary if you are well. The Postal Service will clean and sanitize workspaces more frequently. Additionally, regional representatives will be permitted to participate in Area level telecommunication meetings. We will continue to provide additional information as the situation evolves. Please watch npmhu.org and the NPMHU mobile app for the most current information.

NPMHU and USPS Sign Two Important Memorandums of Understanding as a Result of COVID-19 Pandemic

The NPMHU and the Postal Service have reached agreement on two COVID-19 memorandums addressing: (1) improvements to sick leave for dependent care; and (2) additional paid leave for Mail Handler Assistants (MHAs).

1. For the next 60 days, sick leave may be used by career mail handlers for unexpected childcare needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic pursuant to the MOU Re Sick Leave for Dependent Care. Specifically, employees may use sick leave for dependent care in the event they must care for a child as a result of daycare closures,

school (Pre-K through Grade 12) closures, or the unavailability of a child's primary caregiver as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Unlike career mail handlers, MHAs currently are not eligible for paid sick leave or paid administrative leave. Under this MOU, however, for its 60-day duration, MHAs will be permitted to use up to 80 hours of paid leave for use in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic in certain circumstances. Copies of both memorandums were dispatched to all Local Presidents and posted to npmhu.org on March 18, 2020.



Please Post!!

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