



NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

LOCAL 300 AFL-CIO

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March 18, 2020

To: Members of NPMHU Local 300

RE: COVID-19 Update

These are trying times for us. We are literally at War with an enemy we cannot see. All of us are on the front lines of this War. Mail Handlers have been through other challenging times (9/11, Anthrax, bombs in the mail, etc.) The Coronavirus is a serious threat to us, we all have to vigilant and remain calm, adjusting to this ***“new normal.”***

On the national level, the NPMHU has been meeting with the USPS – Postmaster General and senior postal officers on a continual basis.

As of today, USPS employees that have tested positive nationwide:

- 2 - Seattle, WA (Clerk/MH)
- 2 – Westchester P&DC (EAS)
- 1 – Raleigh, NC
- 1 – White Plains, NY Post Office
- 1 – Manhattan (MVO)
- 2 – NY District (Postal Police)

There are approximately 150 USPS employees on self-quarantine by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), or other medical professionals.

These numbers will increase as the number of people tested increase with more testing being finally made available.

On the local level, since the evening of Saturday March 14, 2020 – I have been having daily constant contact with the USPS on the NE Area, District(s) and

installation levels. Tom Ruther our NPMHU NE Regional Director has been providing direct updates to Local 300 on a daily basis.

The USPS is not the lead agency during this pandemic. They are to follow the recommendations of the CDC and HHS. Below is a summary of the USPS Policy for COVID-19

1. Employees returning from a “LEVEL 3” country or a cruise that visited a “LEVEL 3” country or had a confirmed positive test of another passenger, will be told to self-quarantine and paid Administrative Leave for 14 days.
2. Employees who were in “close contact” - defined right now as within 6 feet or closer for 10 minutes or more - with someone who tested positive with COVID-19, will be told to self-quarantine and paid Administrative Leave for 14 days. Note the definition of close contact has been changing during this fluid time.
3. If employees develop symptoms of COVID-19 while on the 14-day self-quarantine, their leave will be changed from Administrative Leave to Sick Leave.
4. If employee tests positive for COVID-19, they must remain out of work for at least 14 days and only allowed to return to work with a medical certification for work clearance.
5. Postal Service buildings should be cleaned on regular basis - every 2 hours – on touch surfaces (door handles, mail processing equipment consoles, etc...)
6. Gloves, masks, hand sanitizer should be available for employees. -Sanitizing wipes are in short supply. *Many locations are making a cleaning solution with alcohol and wiping the commonly touched areas.*
7. All employees should be receiving regular stand-up talks from USPS management. *If you are not, please notify a shop steward immediately.*

We all need to practice **SOCIAL DISTANCING**. Keep 3 to 6 feet apart at all times. We have asked for stand up talks to be given to limited number of employees at a time, no huddling together for the talks. The USPS will be giving a stand-up talk on Social Gatherings.

PLEASE, IF YOU FEEL SICK, STAY HOME!

The USPS has now instituted a ‘**liberal leave policy**.’ Absences taken during this pandemic should not be used in future discipline. It is a matter of choice to come to work if you don’t feel comfortable commuting to work or at work. You should not feel ‘bullied’ by management to come to work or them try to hold you at work. Sick leave, annual leave, LWOP should be approved consistent with USPS leave regulations & documentation requirements. You still have to call to report your absences.

School & Daycare Closings – parents can use up to 80 hours of Sick Leave for Dependent Care (SLDC) for unexpected childcare needs. A national Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) was just signed today to reflect this change. The USPS said they would approve changes of schedule to the fullest extent possible.

The NPMHU National HQ was looking to get **special leave available for MHAs**. MHAs do not accrue leave in the same manner as FTRs. They are not eligible for paid sick leave or paid administrative leave. Also occurring today, a national MOU was signed giving MHAs up to 80 hours of paid leave for use in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National office of the NPMHU is located in AFL-CIO Headquarters in Washington, DC. The building will be closed for 2 weeks. The national officers, contract administration department, and staff will be working remotely to the fullest extent possible. Phone calls will be forwarded to the remote locations.

The counting of the ballots for the 2019 National Agreement will be delayed. The ballots have been locked and secured. They shall be counted in the near future.

Local 300 Headquarters located in NYC is open. The officers and staff are available. If we cannot answer the phone when you call, we will get back to you.

All around Local 300, we have been enforcing the enhanced cleaning procedures and constantly checking to ensure management is providing masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. Wipes have been in short supply. Please **wash your hands frequently, wear gloves. Ask your supervisor for gloves or a mask. If these or hand sanitizer is unavailable request a shop steward.**

On Saturday night, the 'new normal' started. I was notified of 2 EAS employees testing positive for COVID-19 at Westchester P&DC. The 2 employees did not work since 3/4/20 & 3/6/20 respectively. Other employees that had 'close contact' were told not to work and put on mandatory self-quarantine for 14 days. We faced initial resistance when we demanded the facility be closed for deep cleaning and sanitization. The Union was successful. An outside contractor was brought in. The installation was closed for 24 hours for this to occur. I visited the Westchester P&DC on yesterday. It was good to see the members and they were in good spirits.

The contract will be enforced to the fullest extent during this time. USPS leaders on the national, NE Area, and district levels have given us assurances that contractual provisions and procedures will be followed. However, as history dictates, there are many supervisors and managers that do not! If you have an concerns at all, speak with a shop steward, Branch President, or contact Local 300 HQ.

Attendance in each location is becoming a problem. Each location is short staffed. The USPS is looking to hire additional employees. Most locations have open overtime opportunities. **Please work safe and perform the functions of one person, not the work of 2 or more.**

We are working with the USPS to get even more cleaning done in all locations. Please don't pay attention to rumors, especially on social media.

The USPS is a vital essential service for the country. We ensure the communication network for the nation - Packages need to be delivered – Medicines need to be received. I am very proud of each and every one of you. Keep up the great work providing this essential service for our country. We are expecting a parcel increase since most products are only available online due to store closures. Now is the time for us Mail Handlers to shine. You are a ***Hidden Hero of the Postal Service***. It would take a Presidential order to shut down the USPS. Even though he has no passion for the USPS, I wouldn't expect that to occur.

We will provide periodic updates on our official NPMHU Local 300 website at www.local300npmhu.org - our smartphone app, and postings on Union bulletin boards.

Fraternally,



Kevin Tabarus
President
NPMHU Local 300

BE SAFE!