



COVID-19



Since the very first reported case of Coronavirus affecting a Postal employee in Seattle, Washington things have been evolving very quickly. As many of you now know we have confirmed cases within Local 308's jurisdiction including confirmed and exposed Mail Handlers, and we fear that this is just the beginning. These are indeed frightening and challenging times for all Postal employees and like just about everyone else in the country we are in search of the facts in what has become almost a science fiction scenario. Social distancing, state, county, and municipal stay-at-home orders are phrases we were not aware of even two-weeks ago but are now a part of our everyday conversation. In many facilities around the Local management is conducting service and stand up talks in an effort to keep employees up to speed on policy and rule adjustments during this pandemic. We encourage you to regularly visit the Local and National Websites for updates related to coronavirus. And of course, regularly visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at CDC.gov. In the wake of these events the employer has agreed to provisions with its Unions that will assist postal employees in these extraordinary times. The National Parties have agreed to two significant memoranda that will allow for our career path Mail Handler Assistants to use up to 80 hours of paid leave for absences due to COVID-19 including the use of that leave under the Dependent Care Sick Leave provisions of the Agreement. The use of Dependent Care Sick Leave for career employees under these circumstances has also been expanded to include childcare. These are positive developments and should be recognized as such as we struggle to strike a balance between keeping safe and providing for our loved ones. Through May 17, 2020 Mail Handler Assistants can be granted up to 80 hours of paid leave for use in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic. The second significant MOU signed by the National parties provides for the use of Dependent Care Sick Leave for childcare as many schools, daycare facilities, or primary caregivers are now unavailable. The full text of these agreements are available on both the Local's web site as well as the National web site and have also been widely distributed to representatives throughout the Local.

Like many of the agreements the Union successfully negotiates, operations management, at times doesn't always fully grasp the intent. This, we are certain, will be the case in this instance as well. If you are denied any right to which you feel you may be entitled, under these circumstances or any other circumstances for that matter, always request to consult with a steward.

The employer has distributed plenty of information over the last few weeks and a review of some of the critical aspects are required.

In a March 25, 2020 National President Hogrogian in a memo to the membership writes

"The Postal Service has put the following protocol in place regarding the pandemic:

- 1. 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.***
- 2. Employees determined by the USPS and Public Health 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 and is symptomatic will be told to self-quarantine for 14 days and will be paid Administrative 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.***
- 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. The Postal Service has committed to ramping up its efforts to clean "frequently touched surfaces." Please contact your union representative to report facilities that 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. These talks should be given orally before small groups of 10 or less. 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. Please contact your Union representatives if your facility does not have adequate supplies of these items)."***

This is the protocol as provided to our National Office by Postal Headquarters and as many of you already know, the established protocol is often not implemented as proposed. As it bears repeating, in those cases, facility stewards and other certified representatives should challenge the employer through the grievance procedure and other forms of communication to resolve the conflict. These are uncertain times and we urge all employees to rely exclusively on trusted sources to get accurate information. Facts do matter. Sisters and Brothers, STAY SAFE!

In Union Solidarity,
John Gibson

Trusted Resources

[CDC.GOV](https://www.cdc.gov)

[npmhu.org](https://www.npmhu.org)

[npmhu308.org](https://www.npmhu308.org)

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*NPMHU, Local 308
President's Report
March 2020*