

Postal Worker

West

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SPECIAL EDITION

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BEING POSTAL IN A PANDEMIC

Since the March 1st reports of an infected postal worker at the Seattle NDC surfaced, the US Postal Service officials and Union officials have been proactive in dealing with the emergency that has engulfed most of the world.

USPS Hq officials responded quickly to the situation and in activating internal protocols. The same can not be said about all local management and work floor supervision. As in the past, directives emanating from Washington do not always filter down to or are acted upon by managers tasked with ensuring the nation's mail is processed and delivered often hampered by short staffs. Safety is seldom first to the bosses.

"But now is not the time to point fingers, now is the time to partner and act as the postal family that has gotten us through so many other adverse times," said Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez. "As Union Officials we tend to get frustrated and angered by the constant refusal of management to comply with the contract and their own safety and health rules on a daily basis," he added.

Some Bosses, But Not All, Step Up

We get alarmed when bosses ignore their own rules in a crisis. And like our fellow Americans, we look for leadership in times of turmoil. In the Western Region the Union has heard from the Postmaster General, (albeit via video) who has directed that employees who are sick stay home.

The Unions heard from Pacific Area Vice-President Larry Munoz on telecoms, but to date Western Area VP Gregory Graves has not reached out to the Unions.

Some Districts in the Pacific Area have been in contact with their counterparts in the Local Unions through telecoms and meetings. There are no known telecoms in the Western Area and perhaps some sporadic meetings at the local level.



Some managers, but not all, are conducting 'Town Halls' with employees. At times the Occupational Health Nurse Administrator (OHNA) is invited to the Town Hall but not always.

The Union's Role

The Union is certified by law to enforce the contract in regards to working conditions, hours and wages. Under Article 14 of the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) the Union cooperates with and assists management to live up to their responsibility to provide safe working conditions.

Far too often the Union has to go over and beyond just assisting management, we have to file complaints and pursue statutory relief over occupational hazards.

During this crisis the National Union has been proactive, not only with postal officials, but also internally with the entire National Executive Council (the leadership of the Union) and local unions. By all indications the emergency is going to worsen. "Unfortunately, and undoubtedly, we are just in beginning throes of this crisis as we stay union strong in defense of the health and safety of our members and our families," said National Union President Mark Dimondstein.

"The rest of this Special Edition of the *PWW* is being offered as an educational tool for our members. It is based on the most recent communiques, directives and official regulations. There are some recommendations proffered as well, but they are offered for consideration and not as policy," said Coordinator Gonzalez. "Policy comes from Headquarters!"

TAKING SAFETY SERIOUSLY

Safety is everyone's obligation. Any concerns regarding the manner in which management:

- Does not follow cleaning protocols
- Allows sick employees to be at work without contacting OHNA.
- Does not conduct mandatory safety talks
- Does not provide hand sanitizers
- Does not provide masks & gloves
- Does not have CDC posters posted
- Shares health information about employees, including the names of employees suspected or who have been confirmed to have COVID-19.*
- Attempts to make medical decisions about employees
- Does not issue employees the OHNA contact info

should be reported on PS Form 1767 Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice.

"PS Form 1767 is designed to.....provide prompt action when employees report a hazard. This form provides a channel of communication between employees and management that promotes a prompt analysis and response with corrective action to reports of...unsafe conditions, or practices." [ELM 824.61]

Postal regulations require the supervisor to:

- ⇒ Investigate the alleged condition
- ⇒ Initiate immediate corrective action or make appropriate recommendations.
- ⇒ Record actions or recommendations on PS Form 1767
- ⇒ Forward original PS 1767 and a copy to the next appropriate level of management (i.e., the approving official).
- ⇒ Give the employee a copy signed by the supervisor as a receipt.
- ⇒ Immediately forward the 3rd copy to the facility safety coordinator.

Postal regulations require the Approving Official to:

- ◇ Initiate action to eliminate or minimize the hazard
- ◇ Submit work orders (as necessary)
- ◇ If there are no reasonable grounds to believe a hazard exists the employee must be notified in writing.
- ◇ If the hazard was abated through actions of the approving official the employee must be notified in writing.

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE		Hazard Control Number Assigned by Safety Officer	
REPORT OF HAZARD, UNSAFE CONDITION OR PRACTICE			
I. Employee's Action			
Area (Specify Work Location)			
Describe Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice. Recommended Corrective Action:			
USE THIS FORM TO REPORT ISSUES SUCH AS THOSE TO THE LEFT			
Employee	Signature	Date and Time	
II. Supervisor's Action			
Recommend or Describe Specific Action Taken to Eliminate the Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice. If Corrective Action Has Been Taken, Indicate the Date of Abatement.			
MAKE SURE TO MAKE A COPY BEFORE TURNING THEM IN TO THE SUPERVISOR			
Supervisor	Signature	Date	
III. Approving Official's Action (Check One and Complete)			
The Following Corrective Action was Taken to Eliminate the Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice (Indicate Date of Abatement):			
A Work Order Has Been Submitted to the Manager, Plant Maintenance, to Effect the Following Change:			
There Are No Reasonable Grounds to Determine Such a Hazard Exists. This Decision is Based Upon:			
DO NOT ACCEPT CANNED OR NON RESPONSIVE REPLIES-- FOLLOW THROUGH			
Approving Official	Signature	Date	Date Employee Notified
IV. Maintenance Action (Complete if Necessary)			
Maintenance Supervisor	Signature	Date	Date Hazard Abated
PS Form 1767, Dec. 1982 WHITE - Local Safety Office (After Abatement) PINK - Local Safety Office (After Abatement) YELLOW - Approving Official BLUE - Employee			

- ◇ Forward the original PS 1767 to the safety office with a statement of actions taken.

Postal regulations require safety personnel to:

- * Log and sequentially number all hazard reports on PS Form 1773.
- * Review all 1767s for accuracy, completeness, and follow up.

Postal regulations require Maintenance to:

- Notify the approving official when any PS 1767 maintenance related work order has been completed

[ELM 824.63]

Members are recommended to:

- > File the 1767 (make a copy before submitting it)
- > If not responded to during the tour of duty contact the union representative. (steward, local president, etc.)
- > ensure the Union Rep follows up by filing grievances, reporting the issue to the Joint L-M Safety Committee and or immediately contact with Region/National Union.
- > ensure the issues regarding coronavirus are elevated to the Regional and/or National level ASAP if not abated!

* There is a delicate balance between employee privacy & the workers' need to know.

Keeping our Post Offices Clean

USPS Hq issued directives on what is to be done where there is a confirmed case (or probable case by CDC definition) of a postal employee being infected with COVID-19 or an immediate household member of a postal employee is infected.



In addition to providing, upon request, surgical masks and releasing obviously ill (with COVID-19 type symptoms) employees management is to ensure the following procedures are taken to minimize risk:

- Surfaces that are frequently touched should be cleaned at least daily during disease outbreaks
- Procedures for cleaning common areas are to be upgraded to include use of an approved (registered) antimicrobial product. Employee and custodial procedures for cleaning their workspaces and surfaces were to be updated to include the use of registered antimicrobial product. 1.
- Procedures for cleaning and disinfecting common surface areas and for mail processing equipment and performance management are on the Maintenance Technical Support Center website: www.mtsc.usps.gov/pdf/mmo/2020/mmo03120
- In shared operation work areas– work surfaces, keyboards, computer mice and trackballs, monitors and touchscreens, pens, pencils, styluses, portable scanners, E-stops; Powered Industrial Truck (PIT) equipment controls, steering wheels, seats, seatbelts **must be cleaned at least each operating tour.**
- In cafeterias/lunch rooms and breakrooms– door knobs or handles, paper towel dispenser knobs or handles, refrigerator door handles, microwave door handles and button/keypads, vending machine buttons, table tops, drinking fountains and faucet handles **must be cleaned at least each operating tour.**
- In work room floor– door knobs or handles, employee entrance turnstiles, drinking fountains, time clock buttons, elevator call and operating buttons, handrails (frequently used), telephones (shared) **must be cleaned daily.**
- In lobbies– door knobs, table tops, handrails, vending machine buttons, automated postal centers (APC) and scales **must be cleaned at least daily.**
- In restrooms– door knobs or handles, paper towel dispenser knobs or handles, faucet handles **must be cleaned each operating tour.**
- In Locker and Meeting rooms– door knobs or handles and table tops **must be cleaned daily.**

[MMO-031-2020; 1. COVID-19 Supervisor & Management Guidance V-2 March 13, 2020 { Note: MMO-031-20 2/3/20 was changed on 3/04/2020 to delete "Influenza viruses may live up to 48 hours on hard surfaces and corona viruses may live up to nine days on hard surfaces." }]

Members are recommended to:

- > Report on 1767 if cleaning is not being done. > Do Not blame custodians as it is management's responsibility to ensure the areas are cleaned properly. Many offices are short staffed. > report any direct orders from supervisors to custodians to falsify eMars reports showing cleaning was done when in fact it was not. Report these orders on PS Form 1767.
- > As much as possible you should clean before and after using work areas > Wash hands often >Do not touch nose, mouth or face. > Report shortages of hand sanitizers, disinfectant wipes, masks, and other personal protective equipment (PPE).
- > Report the failure of management to clean and disinfect any work areas where known infected employees frequented.
- > **Contact Your Union Representatives on any and all the above if undermined or thwarted by management!!!**

LEAVE MATTERS

Timing is everything! We face this crisis during a nationwide attendance crack down by management that too often ignores their own regulations requiring supervisors to consider the “welfare of the individual employee.” [ELM 511.1]

USPS Hq directives have emphasized to “STAY HOME WHEN YOU ARE SICK” [COVID-19 S&M Guidance V.2], The PMG’s video declared “If you are sick stay home.” The supervisor’s guide on COVID-19 states: “If you have employees exhibiting these symptoms: fever, cough, and shortness of breath, provide them with a surgical mask and REQUIRE them to go home and seek medical attention...”

This same supervisor guide states: “ALLOW LIBERAL SICK LEAVE USAGE FOR EMPLOYEES WHO ARE SICK.” The problem is, as of press time, there is no official definition of what “liberal sick leave usage” is. “The Union’s view is that at a minimum, “liberal leave” should mean that no leave usage is held against employees and LWOP should be available to those who do not have leave balances to cover the time,” said National President Mark Dimondstein.

Western Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez has been transmitting communications with Pacific Area Vice-President Larry Munoz and Western Area VP Graves in an effort to secure a firm understanding of the ‘liberal leave’ policies in the west.

Centers for Disease Control Guidelines

On February 29, 2020 the CDC issued the following guideline:

*“If you are sick with COVID-19 or suspect you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19STAY HOME EXCEPT TO GET MEDICAL CARE. You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. **DO NOT GO TO WORK**, school, or public areas, (emphasis added).*

[CS 314937-D 02/29/2020] Visit www.cdc.gov/COVID19 for more information.



USPS COVID-19 Pandemic Policy

On March 6, 2020 the Postal Service issued supplemental documents to its Pandemic Influenza Policy updated relative to the new Coronavirus. Those updates included the following guidelines where there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the community:

- Personnel who arrive at work obviously ill, or who become ill at work with COVID-19 type symptoms should be released from work. Such individuals should be advised to remain off work until they no longer have these symptoms. A medical clearance may be required from an absence related to COVID-19.
- Facility medical personnel in coordination with installation heads or Attendance Control Officers should monitor sick leave for observable trends that may indicate a COVID-19 outbreak among postal employees.
- Where there is a confirmed case (or probable case by CDC definition) of a postal employee being infected with COVID-19 or an immediate household member of a postal employee...in addition to the mitigation measures....
- Increase attention to sick leave use and other employee absences. The Postal Medical Staff will consult with local public health authorities regarding recommendations for reporting, testing, return to work clearance for employees who have had COVID-19 or employees with household members who have had COVID-19.

Leave Matters *continued.....*

"It is at time likes this that the true benefit of accrued sick leave is revealed," said Coordinator Omar Gonzalez. "However, some employees, for what ever reason, do not have sick leave. And our PSEs can not earn sick leave," added Gonzalez.

Some of the key points to bear in mind are the following:

- ◆ The General Administrative Policy is to administer the leave program on an equitable basis for all employees, considering (a) the needs of the Postal Service (b) the welfare of the individual employee. [511.1 ELM] **Recommendation: If leave is denied without consideration of your welfare a grievance must be initiated –contact your Union Representative ASAP.**
- ◆ An exception to the advance approval requirement (for sick leave) is made for unexpected illness or injuries, however, in this situation the employee must notify appropriate postal authorities of his or her illness and expected duration of the absence as soon as possible. When sufficient information is provided to determine that the absence may be covered by the FMLA, ...Department of Labor Forms will be mailed to the employee's address of record along with a return envelope.[513.332 ELM;] An FMLA packet should be generated for any employee who uses leave in conjunction with COVID-19 [COVID-19 Supervisor & Management Guidance V-2] **Recommendation: Give as much advance notice as possible so that any unwarranted "unscheduled" determinations can be fought.**
- ◆ Once an employee provides the expected duration of his or her absence, such employee is NOT required to call in again for the same absence. However, if the expected duration changes, the employee should notify management. [JCIM Article 10, page 4] **Recommendation: An employee should not call in every day for an absence of more than one day. Give a reasonable needed duration and if that time off is not needed then report for duty.**
- ◆ ...for an approved absence for which the employee has insufficient sick leave, at the employee's option, such employee MUST be granted annual leave or leave without pay.....an employee need not exhaust annual or sick leave prior to requesting LWOP. [JCIM Article 10 page 5] **Recommendation: If the supervisor will not allow a combination of leave or denies the employee's optional request, contact your Union Representative ASAP.**
- ◆ Postal Support Employees (PSEs) do not earn sick leave . They do receive annual leave to be used for...emergency purposes, as well as, illness or injury [JCIM Article 10 page 11] **Recommendation: PSEs should not be forced to work sick due to insufficient annual leave. Contract your Union Rep if management denies, disapproves or AWOLs any leave requested**
- ◆ ...Employees apply for sick leave by submitting a PS Form 3971, either in advance of the absence or after returning to work. An employee with an unexpected need for sick leave must notify the appropriate supervisor or IVR as soon as possible of the illness and the expected duration of absence. Upon returning to work, the employee must, while on the clock, sign and COMPLETE any required sections of PS Form 3971 [JCIM Article 10 page 11& page 12] **Recommendation: If the absence is due to following PMG advise to stay home if sick, that should be annotated in the 'Remarks' box on the PS 3971.**
- ◆ Acceptable Certification: The Employee & Labor Relations Manual (ELM) contains no prohibition against the submission of a preprinted form **continued on Page 6**

SCHOOL CLOSURES



The closure of schools presents a particular set of issues for our members who have school aged children and are faced with child care issues.

The Union has been proactive with postal management on the impact of school closures. "Management has committed to a liberal leave policy (including LWOP) and liberal policy on change of schedules for personal convenience," said National President Mark Dimondstein.

Once again, there is no official definition of 'liberal leave'. The Regional Coordinator has been in contact with Area Postal officials to secure an understanding of the process. At press time no definitive policy has been promulgated .

However, there are several key points to consider when faced with the issue of school closures.

Continued on page 6

School Closures continued

Purpose of Annual Leave.– Annual leave is provided to employees for rest, for recreation, and for personal and emergency purposes. [ELM 512.11]. The exception to the advance approval requirement is made for emergencies, however, in these situations, the employee must notify appropriate postal authorities of the emergency and the expected duration of the absence as soon as possible. [ELM 512.412]

Acceptable reasons and instructions for Leave Without Pay (LWOP): Personal reasons. LWOP may be granted to cover the absence. [ELM 514]. Each request for LWOP is examined closely and a decision is made based on the needs of the employee and the postal service. [ELM 514.22]. *{ because there is administrative discretion on the part of management to grant or not grant LWOP here is where the 'liberal leave' policy may come into play. If denied LWOP, seek Union Representation. }* **Annotate the School Closure in the Remarks box on 3971**

Change of Schedule

Another option for employees to consider and management to grant is a Temporary Change of Schedule using a **PS 3189**. This form is used by an employee to request a temporary schedule change for their personal convenience. *{ Here again the 'liberal leave' policy may be applied. There should be no issue with having a steward agree to and condone such a request. }*

What is not clear is the process by which employees will either be made to request a Schedule Change before leave can be taken or will be readily granted upon request of the employee. "Not every employee has the luxury of sitters and if the needs of the individual employee are not considered violations of the official leave policies may likely occur and should

From: "Dr. Tammy Campbell"
Date: 3/12/2020 2:16 PM
To: "recipients@federalway..."
Subject: FWPS Closed Beginning Monday...

Dear Federal Way Public Schools Parents... Federal Way Public Schools(FWPS) has been following the Washington State Department of Health...guidance related to school operations such as openings and closure.

Based on the governor's proclamation, and the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, FWPS is closing Monday, March 16 to Friday, April 24, 2020.....

From: Granite School District Communications..
Date: Fri, March 13, 2020 5:21 PM
Subject: Statewide School Dismissal....
To: Granite School District Recipients

As with the NEWLY announced guidance from the Statewide Coronavirus Taskforce, Granite District will immediately implement a district wide 2 week dismissal. Please review the entire message as it will likely answer the bulk of your questions.....

This is NOT a closure. These are preventive measures to help reduce the spread of disease. This recommendation will continue to be evaluated and further adjustments could be made with ongoing guidance from State and Local Health....

School Districts throughout the Western Region have issued notices of school closures and dismissals in varied formats. Written notice, emails, texts and electronic robo calls. If a supervisor requires substantiation for leave requests due to the closures a copy of anyone of these kinds of notice should be sufficient. If the supervisor rejects the notice contact your Union Representative ASAP.

be challenged on a case-by-case basis." said Coordinator Omar Gonzalez. "These are extra-ordinary times where we all must act like a postal family and be fair, as well as , considerate. That includes our members who service the American public. I am sure that if our managers show true compassion postal workers will rise to the occasion."

LEAVE MATTERS *continued from page 5*

... with an authorized staff member, including a nurse, completing and signing the document under the instruction from the attending physician or practitioner. [JCIM Article 10 page 13]

"Look the bottom line is– IF YOU ARE SICK STAY HOME. If you are concerned about your individual welfare and that of your family take the necessary action and challenge any violations of your rights," said Coordinator Omar Gonzalez.

Community Lock Downs/Prevention From Reporting

Per USPS Pandemic Plan (3-6-20) a pandemic may come in waves, each lasting weeks or months. Social distancing is one of the CDC recommendations to reduce the spread of influenza in community settings such as workplaces. How the recommended 3-6 feet distances would be implemented at the USPS is not clear at this time. A White House Executive

Order can place pandemic flu viruses on the list of communicable diseases that require quarantine....State and/or local public health could enact a far broader and more restrictive quarantine that could disrupt postal operations. USPS intends to follow the advice and recommendations for quarantine as it deems appropriate when recommended by the relevant public health authorities. This includes determining on a case-by-case basis, ensuring consistency with USPS regulations, granting leave for employees who are prevented from reporting to work because of an epidemic or pandemic health crisis. USPS has substantial COOP plans for ensuring essential services. **In the event the crisis grows both USPS and the Union will provide more information.** Whether Leave regulations under ELM 519.215 would apply depends on the general scope preventing groups of employees from working or reporting to work. "These are trying times and we will make every effort to keep members informed," said Omar Gonzalez