

APWU Meets with USPS on the Spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The coronavirus, officially named COVID-19, originating in China, has now spread to over 65 countries including to the United States. The APWU is continuing to monitor the situation and is in constant contact with the USPS about COVID-19. The Postal Service informed the APWU on Feb. 29, 2020, that an employee tested positive for the virus.

Last week, the APWU initiated a meeting with USPS leadership to discuss their response to the virus. On March 2, APWU President Mark Dimondstein, Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman, the Directors of the Maintenance, Motor Vehicle Service, and Clerk Crafts, and the officers assigned to Article 14 met with the Postal Service and representatives of the other postal unions to discuss the Postal Service's response and plans and the unions' concerns and suggestions.

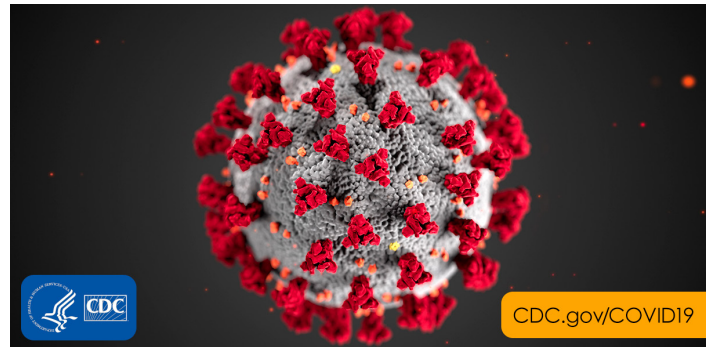
Postmaster General (PMG) Megan Brennan was present along with senior representatives of Labor Relations, Human Resources, the USPS Legal Department, and their incident preparedness team. PMG Brennan discussed with the unions what they are doing to help protect employees.

The Postal Service reported that they are working very closely with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Health and Human Services, and various state public health agencies around the country to address COVID-19.

Stand Up Talks & CDC Resources

Employees around the country should have received multiple "mandatory stand up talks" including:

- *Staying Healthy: Take steps to avoid flu, other illnesses* (Jan. 24, 2020 and Jan. 27, 2020)
- *Health Tips: Flu and respiratory diseases including novel (new) coronavirus* (Feb. 11, 2020)
- *Staying Vigilant: Flu and respiratory disease prevention tips* (Feb. 25, 2020)
- *Staying Vigilant: Flu response and prevention* (Feb. 29, 2020)
- *Voluntary Use of Filtering Facepiece (FFP) Respirators* that explained the use of masks.



Consistent with the processes put in place during the H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic in 2009, employees may choose to wear FFP and/or nitrile gloves at work. Management Instruction EL-810-2009-4 addresses the use of gloves and masks and states management must provide these items.

Management also sent out numerous posters from the CDC that should be prominently displayed in every facility to include bathrooms and break areas. These are:

- *Stop Germs! Wash Your Hands*
- *What you need to know about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*
- *What to do if you are sick with the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*
- *Symptoms of Coronavirus Disease 2019*
- *Stop the Spread of Germs.*

You can find all these resources on apwu.org/coronavirus as well.

APWU Response

In addition to the meeting at headquarters, a teleconference with the Regional Coordinators and then a full briefing of the National Executive Council (comprised of every national officer) was held on March 3, 2020. The Regional Safety and Health Representatives will be reaching out to the local and state organizations to make sure they are aware of the protocols, guidelines, and to assist the locals as needed.

The APWU has contacted two expert safety professionals who will assist us. One of them previously worked with the APWU during the 2001 anthrax crisis as well as the H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic and is well versed in efforts of both the APWU and the USPS during these past events.

Virus On Surfaces

During these meetings with the Safety and Health Representatives one of the most common questions directed at union representatives from members is about COVID-19 being transmitted on surfaces. The CDC has a Frequently Asked Questions page on the virus where this is addressed:

There is still a lot that is unknown about the newly emerged COVID-19 and how it spreads. Two other coronaviruses have emerged previously to cause severe illness in people (MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV). The virus that causes COVID-19 is more genetically related to SARS-CoV than MERS-CoV, but both are betacoronaviruses with their origins in bats. While we don't know for sure that this virus will behave the same way as SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV, we can use the information gained from both of these earlier coronaviruses to guide us.

In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures. Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread most often by respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods and there have not been any cases of COVID-19 in the United States associated with imported goods.

Prevent Virus Spread

The most effective method to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is frequent handwashing, use of hand sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol, and **staying home from work when you are sick.**

Along with these the Postal Service has said they will be implementing additional cleaning and sanitizing of facilities and work stations. They will be providing hand sanitizer in facilities to include customer areas.

COVID 19
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

SYMPTOMS* OF CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

Patients with COVID-19 have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms can include

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

*** Symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure. If you have been in China within the past 2 weeks and develop symptoms, call your doctor.**

www.cdc.gov/COVID19

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The infographic features a background image of a person coughing into their elbow. It includes the logos for the American Postal Workers Union and the CDC.

The additional cleaning will be in line with what was done during the 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic. Management issued a new MMO-031-20 Influenza and Coronavirus Cleaning Contingency. This Maintenance Management Order (MMO) should be in effect now, and the APWU is currently reviewing it to ensure it is sufficient. The APWU requested that the current cleaning solutions under the MS-47 TL-5 be temporarily changed to chemicals previously used to better ensure disinfection of work areas.

“No one can take COVID-19 lightly,” President Dimondstein said. “We will be working diligently and unleash all necessary resources to keep our members informed and protected. The health and safety of all postal workers is our top priority and we insist it be the Postal Service’s priority as well.”

“There is no question that this must be a concern to all workers and everyone in this country,” said Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman. “We will provide you information and guidance as it develops.

“This is a fluid situation and new things will be learned as COVID-19 progresses and the researchers learn more,” Director Zimmerman continued. “Keep washing your hands and please follow the rest of the CDCs guidelines.”

Each post office and distribution center – no matter the size – should:

- Have all the Stand Up talks,
- Post the CDC posters as required by USPS headquarters,
- Get an adequate supply of gloves and masks,
- Have hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes.

If this is not happening in your workplace, please contact your local or state organization that can reach out to their National Business Agents and the Regional Coordinator to address the issue. The Postal Service has committed to these issues being quickly addressed and rectified.

For more information on COVID-19 or the resources listed text VIRUS to 91990 or scan the QR code below with your smartphone’s camera. Documents and links to CDC resources can be accessed from this page, apwu.org/coronavirus.

