



National Association of Letter Carriers

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Statement from President Fredric V. Rolando

March 18, 2020

The situation surrounding the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) is rapidly evolving. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is constantly updating its recommendations to the public regarding safeguards and precautions we should all be taking. As a union, we have made sure to keep this guidance current and provide links to important information on the Safety and Health section of the NALC website. Additionally, information has been distributed to the 15 national business agents (NBAs) throughout the country to provide advice to the branches and our members.

Mandatory Stand-Up Talks have been issued by USPS headquarters to be given in every post office across the nation. Much of the information included here has been or will be covered in those standup talks. NALC has been in close contact with USPS HQ and is providing edits and inputs to each standup talk that is distributed to be given to employees. Standup talks will be posted on the safety and health page of NALC's website. Please check it often to be sure standup talks are given in your office.

CDC has recommended several tips for everyone to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses like COVID-19, such as:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Practice social distancing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60-percent alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Stay home when you are sick.

We have remained in constant communication with Postmaster General (PMG) Megan Brennan and other management officials. We have discussed the Postal Service's overall efforts related to the outbreak and several issues specific to letter carriers. The Postal Service has committed to following the recommendations of the CDC and the appropriate public health officials service wide. So far, there have been a few postal employees who have tested positive for COVID-19, none acquired the disease through work activities. In these situations, public health officials have evaluated those employees' activities and interactions with others and determined which employees and others should enter a quarantine period.

Eligible employees identified by public health officials are being paid administrative leave for the quarantine period. In the event you are contacted by a local public health official and identified as someone who may have had contact with an individual who has tested positive for coronavirus, please immediately inform your supervisor and local NALC branch officer as a means to protect your coworkers and community.

In some cities and states, government authorities have identified groups of people that should self-quarantine, such as individuals over a certain age. While the Postal Service is considered mission critical and not subject to state and local directives, employees that choose to self-quarantine in these circumstances may use sick leave for the quarantine period. Again, eligible employees directed by CDC or public health officials to quarantine will be paid administrative leave.

If you have reason to believe you may have possibly been exposed to the coronavirus either at work or elsewhere, you should immediately contact your healthcare provider, follow the instructions you receive, and stay home until you are cleared to return to work.

Another obvious concern is childcare needs caused by the large number of schools that have closed. We have negotiated a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) with USPS (M-01910) that will allow career letter carriers to use sick leave for dependent care to care for a child as the result of a closed daycare, school or the unavailability of the child's primary caregiver due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This MOU is in effect for 60 days and is available on the NALC website. The Postal Service has also instructed managers to liberally approve requests for changes of schedule to accommodate childcare issues.

Additionally, we have negotiated a new MOU (M-01911) with USPS that will give city carrier assistants an additional 80 hours of paid leave to use in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, for any of the reasons I previously explained. This agreement and the additional leave are in effect for 60 days. This MOU is also available on the NALC website.

We are actively discussing other leave policy modifications.

USPS has committed to provide daily supplies necessary for postal employees to clean frequently touched items in the office such as carrier cases, doorknobs and door handles, bathroom fixtures, scanners, etc., and any other items we encounter while on Postal Service owned property.

USPS has also committed to providing necessary supplies for letter carriers to use to clean steering wheels and other frequently touched surfaces in postal vehicles. To the extent possible, letter carriers should use the same postal vehicle each day.

While the CDC does not recommend wearing masks for well people, USPS has committed to provide masks and nitrile gloves for any employee that requests them.

Letter carriers face a different set of circumstances than most while on the street. I cannot stress enough the importance of following the hand washing and hand sanitizing guidelines while delivering your routes. Of course, soap and water are not always available while on the street. The Postal Service has committed to providing hand sanitizer for letter carriers to use each day.

We have discussed other issues letter carriers may encounter on the street. There are delivery points where the letter carrier may be at a heightened risk of being exposed to the coronavirus. If you have a delivery point like that, please notify your supervisor and a branch officer or your national business agent as soon as possible. USPS has agreed that temporary alternate delivery arrangements will be made in these situations.

Some letter carriers have questioned whether coronavirus can be spread from the mail and parcels. While this is a valid concern we will continue to monitor, the CDC states no confirmed case of COVID-19 is a result of touching mail and there is a very low risk due to the poor survivability of coronaviruses on these types of surfaces.

We are working with USPS to establish alternate delivery instructions to eliminate customer contact with the Mobile Delivery Device (MDD). We anticipate this to be finalized very soon. In the meantime, letter carriers should practice social distancing from customers and minimize customer contact with the device. Letter carriers should also frequently clean the MDD with wipes or other appropriate cleaning products, particularly if the device is touched by another person. When this change is finalized, letter carriers should be notified by a standup talk. We will also distribute the information on NALC's website, the NALC Member App and through social media.

The Postal Service has agreed to cancel all scheduled route inspections and adjustments in March and April 2020. This will be reevaluated at the end of April.

The work letter carriers perform every day plays a vital role to the people of the United States. During this challenging time, that role becomes even greater as we deliver lifesaving and life-sustaining goods to our customers to assist them through this outbreak. Letter carriers are known for the crucial work they perform serving the public, especially in times like this. Please continue to take every precaution to protect yourself, your coworkers, and your customers.

One of the challenges we face in an organization the size of the Postal Service is ensuring information is communicated to every employee. I am asking for your help spreading the information in this statement to your fellow employees. Additionally, it is important that issues in each office are promptly reported so they can be addressed. **If you see any problems such as lack of any supplies mentioned here, standup talks not being conducted, or any practice or instruction that conflicts with what I have outlined here, please promptly communicate that information to a branch officer or your national business agent.**

Thank you for your persistence and determination to stay safe and serve the people of this country. We play an important role every day, but the service we provide becomes more critical with each day that passes during this pandemic. We will continue to keep you informed about this rapidly evolving situation. Please check the NALC website, NALC member app, NALC Bulletin, and our social media accounts for more information. Again, if you have any questions or issues to report, please contact a branch officer or your national business agent.

Thank you and please stay safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Z. Q.', located below the text 'Thank you and please stay safe.'