



National Postal Mail Handlers Union

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November 2, 2020

Message from President Paul Hogrogian

Brothers and Sisters,

Mail Handlers and postal workers from around the country continue to courageously perform essential federal service under the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 reports issued by the Postal Service on October 1, 2020 showed 1,872 postal workers who had tested positive and 599 employees who had been presumed to be positive for a total of 2,471 infected employees. The number of postal employees in quarantine were 4,452. Just 1 month later (November 2, 2020) the latest reports are extremely concerning. They show that there are 2,618 postal workers who are confirmed to be COVID-19 positive and 981 employees presumed to be positive for a total of 3,596 infected employees. The numbers reflected an increase of almost 46% in infected postal employees over that one-month period. The number of postal employees in quarantine is 4,479. Unfortunately, at least 97 postal workers have died because of COVID-19, including 4 Mail Handlers. We are almost 8 months into this pandemic and 31 states are showing major increases in their COVID numbers. While the numbers in the Northeast and East continue to stabilize, the numbers in other parts of the country, especially in those jurisdictions where face covering and social distancing policies are not strictly enforced, are worsening at a disturbing rate. The availability rates in many postal installations continue to create staffing issues.

This means that this crisis is far from over. The numbers are getting worse; they are not getting better despite what some of our elected officials are saying. There is no real end in sight. Conditions will only worsen as temperatures begin to drop and more people are driven indoors. We must remain vigilant and continue to protect ourselves and our co-workers. The stabilizing of the infection rate in the Northeast and East proves that the protocols put in place work. We must continue to follow these protocols, especially those concerning social distancing and the wearing of face coverings and masks.

Social distancing applies to all postal workplaces including plants, on the docks and in lunch and break rooms.

Complying with these protocols will protect yourself as well as your co-workers.

Please contact your Union representatives if your facility is not following any of these protocols (Face Coverings, Supplies, Social Distancing, Stand-Up Talks, Cleanings, etc.).

NPMHU representatives continue to meet on a regular basis with their counterparts in postal management to discuss the Postal Service's response to the outbreak of the virus and to ensure that the proper protocols are in place during ever-changing circumstances. The NPMHU, as well as the APWU, NALC, and NRLCA, have been in discussions with senior Postal Management to implement a "temperature taking" process in postal installations. The NPMHU feels that as more and more postal employees are returning to work, more protections need to be put in place. Details such as procedures when an employee exceeds that threshold, return to work protocols, and privacy concerns are still being finalized. Discussions are also taking place regarding which installations will implement "temperature taking" procedures. Finalizing these details has become more complicated than expected.

Discussions with the Postal Service are also taking place regarding making COVID-19 testing available for postal employees at postal facilities. The NPMHU believes that this would be a positive step in ensuring that Mail Handlers and all postal workers are protected from the COVID-19 pandemic. More details will be provided as these discussions progress.

The NPMHU also reached agreement with the Postal Service to further extend the following Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and policy statements until December 31, 2020:

1. Sick Leave for Dependent Care (Child Care)
2. Liberal Leave Policy
3. MHA Leave
4. Temporary MHA Exception Period
5. Temporary Extension on Step 3 and Arbitration Appeals

The Liberal Leave Letter provides that "Leave taken for COVID-19 related reasons...may not be cited in discipline for failing to maintain an assigned schedule under ELM 511.43."

Our Regional Directors are in constant contact with their counterparts in the Postal Area Offices to discuss COVID-19 issues. If you are aware of any violations of the protocols listed above, please bring them to the attention of your local union representatives so that they may refer them to the Regional Directors. Our Regional Directors have been extremely successful in rectifying problems brought to their attention. However, they cannot correct a problem of which they are not aware.

Earlier this year new Postmaster General Louis DeJoy issued several memos outlining his “expectations and plan.” These “expectations and plan” include the following:

- “Overtime will be eliminated. Again, we are paying too much in OT and it is not effective and will soon be taken off the table.”
- The USPS will no longer use excessive cost to get the basic job done: “If the plants run late they will keep the mail for the next day.”

The plans also include removal of mail processing equipment and the reduction of retail units.

Most processing plants were already extremely understaffed. The implementation of these plans resulted in delays in the processing and delivery of mail and packages, including critical items such as prescriptions and election materials. Delaying mail and cutting services can only lead customers to seek alternate means of delivery and decrease much needed revenue.

The Postal Service implemented these initiatives without notification, discussion, or negotiation with the NPMHU or the other postal unions. After extreme reaction and pressure from the media, the public, and congressional representatives, the Postmaster General agreed to suspend these policies but only until after the November elections. Now that the election period is nearing an end, we can only assume that the resumption of these ill-advised policies is right around the corner. The NPMHU will vigorously enforce the provisions of the National Agreement and all negotiated MOUs as they apply to overtime and staffing.

Please read your bulletin boards and visit our website (NPMHU.org) and our mobile APP on a regular basis to obtain the latest information. We must be vigilant about how we go about our business, but we must remain as calm as possible. We will all get through this together. Please stay safe.

If you have any questions, please contact your steward or another Union Representative.



Paul Hogrogian

President/NPMHU