



National Postal Mail Handlers Union

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Local 303 COVID-19 Virus Update #3

I can start this update on a brighter note, according to most COVID-19 projection models Californian Governor Gavin Newsom's decision to issue a shelter in place order early may have flattened the curve of infections. California is the most populated state and Los Angeles is the second largest city in the country. My understanding of flatten the curve of infections is that we won't have the devastating outcome of deaths as New York City crumbles under. This does not mean that we are not going to have a difficult road ahead, it simple means follow the protocols that are in place and things will be better soon. Governor Stephen F. Sisolak took the same shelter in place measures in Las Vegas their curve has been flattened also.

The numbers for the Postal Services as of April 4, 2020 are: 4082 coworkers under quarantine and 263 tested positive. In the Pacific Area 310 employees are quarantined and 4 tested positive. This was Saturday morning but by Sunday evening 2 more positive test were reported. No mail handlers are included in the reported positive test. The facilities are Los Angeles P&DC administrative office, LA NDC transportation, and Santa Clarita Maintenance.

The Union and Postal Service agreed on a MOU (Liberal Changes of Schedule and Leave). Now Congress has stepped in with the Families First Act it is a law and therefore the interpretation is an ongoing topic. The Postal Service and Union issue a frequently asked questions (FAQ's) regarding the law. The complete Law and FAQs can be found on the local website.

Locally some of the concerns that management have tried to use as a way of rewriting the Law: They claim that the Families First Act supersedes all other MOUs that had been agreed to between the Union and Postal Service. That is not true, the Act is in conjunction with all MOUs. The Act is a Law that became effective April 1, 2020 and management and the Union as always, are at opposite ends of the spectrum on its interpretation. I would hope that it will not come to the need to file grievances to get the correct pay for each mail handler who has a COVID-19 leave request. This is not the time for a overzealous SDO to be allowed to complicate matters and produce undue stress for mail handlers that need leave. Submit your 3971s as you feel the need, and if not approved or your pay is not what was expected contact your steward so a grievance can be filed.

The Union and the Postal Service expect that there will be a large number of absences related to COVID-19 and agreed on a MOU that allows the Postal Service to exceed the allowable percentage for MHAs for a period of 60 days. I have not seen any facilities taking advantage of this MOU. What I have been hearing is management telling shop stewards that they need to move the mail and crossing craft or supervisors doing craft work is needed. I do not agree with that and if it were correct, Postal Headquarters and National Union would have agreed on a MOU. The local managers are holding back on the hiring for budget bonus reasons, not the ability to find new employees. There are a lot of citizens not working now needing jobs and they have headquarters approval to hire, what other reason could it be?

The short video is posted on the web explaining how the task of washing your hands will help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. Please take the time to watch it!

Stay safe and together we will flatten the curve.

Eddie Cowan
Local President