



National Postal Mail Handlers Union

Paul V. Hogrogian
National President

Michael J. Hora
National Secretary-Treasurer

June Harris
Vice President
Central Region

John A. Gibson
Vice President
Eastern Region

David E. Wilkin
Vice President
Northeastern Region

Lawrence B. Sapp
Vice President
Southern Region

Don J. Sneesby
Vice President
Western Region

January 29, 2021

To: Local Presidents
Regional Directors/Representatives
National Executive Board

From: Charles R. Manago *CRM*
Contract Administration Representative

Re: **USPS and COVID-19 Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)**

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

The NPMHU National Executive Board and its Contract Administration Department are dedicated to protecting the health and safety of our craft and all bargaining unit members during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, we have worked on ensuring that proper COVID-19 protocols on PPEs, the wearing of masks, deep cleanings, and regular safety talks were established and enforced. The NPMHU also negotiated several “COVID Memoranda” and secured a “liberal leave” policy with regard to COVID-related absences.

With the continuing winter surge of the disease and record numbers of infections, hospitalizations, and deaths, the NPMHU remains deeply concerned and vigilant. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently has identified variants that are circulating globally and have been identified in at least 20 States.

- In the United Kingdom (UK), a new variant called B.1.1.7 has emerged with an unusually large number of mutations. This variant spreads more easily and quickly than other variants. Currently, there is no evidence that it causes more severe illness or increased risk of death. This variant was first detected in September 2020 and is now highly prevalent in London and southeast England. It has since been detected in numerous countries around the world, including the United States and Canada.
- In South Africa, another variant called 1.351 has emerged independently of the variant detected in the UK. This variant, originally detected in early October 2020, shares some mutations with the variant detected in the UK. There have been cases caused by this variant outside of South Africa, and it has been recently detected in the State of South Carolina.
- In Brazil, a variant called P.1 emerged and was identified in four travelers from Brazil, who were tested during routine screening at Haneda airport outside Tokyo, Japan. This variant contains a set of additional mutations that may affect its ability to be recognized by antibodies. This variant already has been detected in Minnesota.

These variants seem to spread more easily and quickly than other variants, which may lead to more cases of COVID-19. Rigorous and increased compliance with public health mitigation strategies, such as vaccination, physical distancing, use of masks, hand hygiene, and isolation and quarantine, will be essential to limiting the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and protecting public health.





National Postal Mail Handlers Union

Paul V. Hogrogian
National President

Michael J. Hora
National Secretary-Treasurer

June Harris
Vice President
Central Region

John A. Gibson
Vice President
Eastern Region

David E. Wilkin
Vice President
Northeastern Region

Lawrence B. Sapp
Vice President
Southern Region

Don J. Sneesby
Vice President
Western Region

Congress last year provided some additional protection to help slow the spread of the disease and help protect the health of workers, by passing the Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) which provided up to 14 days of paid “COVID related” Emergency Paid Sick Leave and 12 weeks of Expanded Family Medical Leave. However, “Family First” leave expired on December 31, 2020 when Congress failed to renew it. While it is no longer current law, the NPMHU firmly believes that USPS management has the duty, option, and the responsibility, to continue to abide by the “Family First” principles and grant paid “administrative” leave for those off work due to exposure or diagnosis of COVID, regardless of where the exposure may have taken place.

Management, however, has refused to do so. Instead, postal management has issued a “decision tree,” dated January 21, 2021, that indicates administrative leave will only be granted if the employee contracted the disease in the workplace or if the employee was placed into quarantine because of close contact in the workplace or with other postal employees. It is the policy of the USPS that, in all other situations, employees must use their own personal leave. The NPMHU believes that this USPS position is ill conceived and short sighted. It will only result in employees, who would otherwise be in quarantine and on administrative leave, reporting to work and putting their co-workers at risk.

Employees who have been determined to have been in close contact (as defined by the CDC) with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 or have been diagnosed with COVID-19 themselves should report that exposure or diagnosis to postal management. Should management deny Administrative Leave and force the employee to use their own annual or sick leave, the appropriate grievances should be filed.

Meanwhile, NPMHU Legislative/Political Director Katie Maddox continues the hard work in the legislative arena to restore the provisions of “Families First” Act that expired at the end of last year. The NPMHU also continues to advocate that postal employees, as essential workers, be given priority access to the COVID vaccines, a priority with which many States and localities have agreed. We continue to promote and advocate for the mandatory wearing of masks as a basic health and safety measure in the workplace. Please Stay Safe!

Please disseminate this information as you deem appropriate. Should you have any questions, contact the Contract Administration Department.

Cc: Paul V. Hogrogian, National President
Michael J. Hora, National Secretary-Treasurer
Teresa L. Harmon, Manager, Contract Administration