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Coronavirus precautions

The coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) is a disease that was first identified in Wuhan, China but has since spread to locations throughout the world. Make sure you do your part to limit the spread of COVID-19 by taking necessary precautions. This information is based on guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Mandatory stand-up talks and posters

The Postal Service has issued mandatory stand-up talks based on information from the CDC. These stand-up talks help disseminate vital information for employees to prevent and mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. Posters from the CDC also should be posted around the facility. These posters cover various topics, such as stopping the spread of germs, symptoms of the coronavirus and what to do if you are sick with the coronavirus.

What can I do to prevent the spread?

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Cleaning on a daily basis

The Postal Service should be following MMO-031-20, Influenza and

Coronavirus Cleaning Contingency on a daily basis due to flu season.

- Surfaces that are frequently touched should be cleaned at least daily during disease outbreaks.
- Postal Service procedures for cleaning common areas will be upgraded to include use of an approved (registered) antimicrobial product.
- Employee and custodial procedures for cleaning their workspaces and surfaces will be updated to include use of a registered antimicrobial product.

Social distancing

To reduce exposure you should practice social distancing. The following are recommendations by the CDC and the Postal Service:

- Maintaining a 3-foot to 6-foot separation between employees and between employees and customers, to the extent feasible.
- Maintaining a 3-foot distance between carriers and customers, to the extent feasible. Remain courteous; remember that accepting mail or parcels does not pose a substantial risk of transmission.
- Reducing face-to-face encounters for employees; try to avoid holding meetings in rooms where social distancing is not feasible.
- Consider avoiding travel and large gatherings where social distancing is not feasible.
- Avoiding hand shaking with business partners or among friends. If you do handshake or interact by touching, then do not touch your mouth, nose or eyes until you wash your hands as soon as possible afterwards.

Personal protective equipment

The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should wear a mask only if a healthcare professional recommends it. A facemask should be used by people who are showing symptoms of COVID-19. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks also is crucial for health workers and other people who are taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

Notwithstanding the CDC recommendation, the Postal Service has committed to providing surgical masks and nitrile gloves upon request to employees in accordance with Management Instruction EL-810-2009-4.

The risk from handling mail

The CDC states that there is very low risk of transmission of coronaviruses on imported goods or mail due to its poor survivability on such surfaces. The CDC has further stated that, currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods, and there have not been any reported cases of COVID-19 in the United States associated with imported goods.

Exposure during delivery

If there is a delivery location that you feel exposes you to an increased risk, immediately report the delivery point to your supervisor, shop steward and/or branch officer.

The Postal Service has stated that it is committed to making temporary alternative delivery arrangements for delivery points that may reasonably pose an increased risk.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough and/or shortness of breath.

If you are sick

Stay home if you are sick, even if you do not have COVID-19 symptoms. Stay home if you are sick and have COVID-19 symptoms. Either way, get plenty of rest and consult your health care provider. Follow normal procedures to report that you are sick. COVID-19 symptoms include the following:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The CDC states that you should not go to work if you are sick. This has been reinforced by the Postal Service Pandemic Influenza Plan as well as Mandatory Stand-Up Talk Feb. 11, 2020 Health Tips: Flu and respiratory diseases including novel (new) coronavirus.

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as a cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider immediately. The CDC recommends that you call ahead of a medical appointment to let the healthcare provider know that you may have COVID-19. This will help the healthcare provider's office take steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

Staying updated

A lot is still unknown about the coronavirus. As the situation is constantly evolving, it is important to stay updated. Follow the CDC website at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and at [nalc.org](https://www.nalc.org) under Safety and Health for more updates. **PR**

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