



National Association of Letter Carriers

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Statement from President Fredric V. Rolando

Re: COVID-19 Virus Crisis and the Administration's Attack on the Postal Service

The entire world continues to navigate through uncharted territory as we work and live through the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. What was once considered normal or routine just a few weeks ago is very different from the realities we currently face. What used to be certain has quickly become challenging. So much has changed in our lives, and it seemingly changes each day.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I doubt many people considered the possibility of a state or local municipality requiring them to wear a mask when they go out in public. In some areas, that is now reality.

Just this week, USPS modified its policy to now require employees to wear face coverings in certain situations. The Postal Service released a mandatory stand-up talk which states that until the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer an issue, employees must wear face coverings or masks when there is a local or state face-covering order or directive in place; or when an employee who does not deal directly with the public cannot achieve or maintain social distancing in the workplace.

Cloth face coverings or masks are mandatory, consistent with such local or state face-covering directives or orders. States, territories, and districts which currently have state-wide mandatory orders to wear face coverings include Colorado, Connecticut, Washington, D.C., Hawaii, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and Rhode Island. Several local jurisdictions have also issued mandatory orders in California, Hawaii, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, and Texas. Even the Department of Defense has made it mandatory for anyone on its properties to wear a cloth mask.

The situations in which face coverings or masks must be worn and the expiration date of the orders vary greatly amongst the many jurisdictions. Check any mandates in your area for specific requirements.

You may request a face covering or mask from your supervisor. You may also provide your own personal cloth face covering. If you cannot wear a face covering for health reasons, you should let your supervisor know. Please let us know of any issues regarding this. The Postal Service has also agreed to provide an N-95 mask if an employee's physician indicates that the use of the N-95 mask instead of other face coverings reduces a particular employee's risk due to some diagnosed condition.

What this means for letter carriers is that when they are out in public, they must follow any local or state directives regarding wearing masks.

The requirement that face coverings and masks are mandatory for employees who cannot achieve or maintain social distancing in the workplace should never be misconstrued to mean that social distancing is not as important if you are wearing a mask. This directive should not be an issue for letter carriers, and for the most part, would not apply. On March 30, 2020, NALC and the Postal Service agreed to implement temporary workplace changes to promote social distancing (M-01915). This memorandum of understanding (MOU) directed the local parties to immediately discuss potential scheduling and office setup changes such as staggered start times, scheduling letter carriers to begin tours in groups of 10 or less, the manner in which stand-up talks are given, as well as break locations and times, and other initiatives to maximize social distancing.

If social distancing guidelines are not being followed in your office, please immediately contact your shop steward, branch officers, National Business Agent, or NALC headquarters at COVID19@nalc.org.

The March 30, 2020, MOU (M-01915) also committed the parties to limiting individuals to working only in their employing facilities to the extent possible. When not possible, the Postal Service has agreed to a few additional precautions in the limited circumstance when a carrier is sent to another office to work. In these situations, the Postal Service has agreed the following should be done:

- The supervisor and steward in the losing office will jointly determine which carrier will go to the gaining office
- If there is concern from either the loaned carrier or those in the gaining office about the loaned carrier entering the facility, the mail will be placed on the dock or somewhere outside where it can be loaded without entering the building
- If a loaned carrier does not bring a vehicle from the losing office, the gaining office will have appropriate cleaning supplies for the carrier to sanitize the vehicle he/she will be using

To be clear, this does not change the fact that the MOU states letter carriers will work in their employing facility “to the extent possible.” It simply puts extra precautionary measures into place when a letter carrier does report to another office to work. If you have issues with this, please immediately contact your shop steward, branch officers, National Business Agent, or NALC headquarters at COVID19@nalc.org.

Earlier this week, the Postal Service established a COVID-19 Supplies Command Center to support USPS facilities with ordering, and tracking necessary supplies to keep employees safe and facilities clean during the coronavirus pandemic. In addition to facilities continuing to order supplies following standard procedures and using local sources where available, the command center is working closely with supply management and district supply coordinators to centrally fulfill orders for masks, gloves, air and hand sanitizers, cleaning products and other items directly from the USPS Material Distribution Center in Topeka, KS.

Facilities and employees can contact the center for help tracking orders and for when they need assistance in locating and ordering supplies. Additionally, the center will monitor field inventories daily to assist districts in identifying facilities that are low on items needed to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Employees can call the COVID-19 Supplies Command Center at 844-773-3594, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time.

Please also continue to contact us with any questions, and to report issues as well. From the beginning of this pandemic, the national officers, staff and NALC representatives throughout the country have been, and will continue to be, in constant communication and negotiation with management officials at every level of the organization regarding supplies, equipment, policies, protocols, and work procedures necessary to keep letter carriers safe.

Remember, if you have questions or issues in your facility related to COVID-19, and you don't have immediate access to a steward or branch officer, or are unable to contact your NBA office, please contact NALC headquarters at COVID19@nalc.org. When using this resource, please be sure to include your name and NALC branch number in your email. Having this information upfront allows NALC headquarters to quickly address your concerns.

In the past week, we have negotiated two additional MOUs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first MOU (M-01918), regarding the signing of overtime lists, allows the local parties to mutually elect to develop a sign-up process for full-time employees who did not, for whatever reason, sign the overtime lists during the two week period for doing so as outlined in Article 8.5.A of the National Agreement. This is due to the potential effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on staffing levels.

The second MOU (M-01919), regarding COVID-19 related absences, states that beginning February 29, 2020, such absences will not be considered by managers when they are reviewing the attendance record of employees requesting reassignment under the Transfers MOU.

Also, with regard to COVID-19 related absences, USPS headquarters recently sent messaging to its Area representatives stating the following is now in effect for all NALC represented employees:

“Career and/or non-career employees who are serving their first 90 workdays (or 120 calendar days for CCA’s) will not have absences taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic cited or considered for disciplinary action or involuntary separation.”

This directive is consistent with the intent of the Postal Service’s recent policy on liberal changes of schedule and leave, and the recent MOUs RE: Temporary Expanded Sick Leave for Dependent Care During COVID-19 (M-01910) and RE: Temporary Additional Paid Leave for CCAs (M-01911), and in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

By now, you have undoubtedly heard plenty about the financial situation the Postal Service is currently facing due to the impact on its revenues related to the pandemic and the shutdown of the U.S. economy, amongst other things. We will remain tirelessly committed on a daily basis to continue work with our congressional representatives regarding proposed provisions for future stimulus packages related to the COVID-19 virus. Provisions which would include providing appropriations to the Postal Service in order to ensure it has the resources necessary to continue operations and delivery services for the American people through this pandemic.

The most recent stimulus package, commonly referred to as "3.5", was designed to replenish a small business rescue program known as the Paycheck Protection Program, to provide hospitals with funding, and to implement a nationwide virus testing program. Because of the limited nature of this package, there was little, if any, talk of including USPS relief or other necessary appropriations in this stimulus package.

We drafted a white paper - a roadmap laying out a pathway on how to provide financial relief to the Postal Service from the pandemic. The white paper is posted on our website on the front page and in the "Government Affairs" section under "News & Updates." It includes the necessary provisions that must be included in the next stimulus bill to sustain the Postal Service through the pandemic. I also provided a very detailed explanation of our plan in my April 17, 2020, statement which can be found on the "COVID-19" page on the NALC website.

The Postal Service's existence predates the founding of our country and is authorized by the Constitution of the United States. Ignoring its immediate and long-term financial needs necessary to survive through the effects of this national emergency is unacceptable. I have said it before and I will say it again, Congress, and ultimately the White House, must put their politics and agendas aside, and step up to provide financial appropriations to the Postal Service; just like it did in March for private companies damaged by the pandemic-induced recession with a \$2.2 trillion relief package that did not include any appropriations to the Postal Service.

Even as our members heroically serve on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis, we continue to face politically based attacks. The Washington Post reported yesterday that the Treasury Department wants to take control of collective bargaining, set pricing policy, and decide senior executive appointments in return for the Postal Service's access to a \$10 billion line of credit to deal with the pandemic.

When asked about this issue at a press event later that day, President Trump said that "the Postal Service is a joke," and that it should quadruple current package rates. He incorrectly claimed that the USPS loses money on every package it delivers for Amazon and other internet companies, and then added that he would not sign any legislation that provides financial assistance to the Postal Service unless it raises rates first.

Shortly after the President spoke, I responded in an interview on Yahoo Finance and noted that the administration is grossly misinformed about postal finances, both now and long before the pandemic. The Postal Service and its employees are absolutely no joke.

Of course, it would be a huge mistake to raise rates by 400% at any time, but especially in the middle of a pandemic and severe recession. It would harm our customers and damage a profitable part of the Postal Service's business. The President then followed up his comments with a tweet that appeared to roll back his earlier threats which said: "I will never let our Post Office fail. It has been mismanaged for years, especially since the advent of the internet and modern-day technology. The people that work there are great, and we're going to keep them happy, healthy, and well."

We responded with appreciation for the kind words about our members and reminded him that we are the only lifeline to many rural areas of America that are too often forgotten. Our mission is to continue serving Americans through this crisis, delivering medicine and essential goods to keep people healthy and the economy moving.

Of course, we remain concerned that the Treasury Department is pursuing a political and ideological agenda instead of focusing on the crisis at hand. We will continue to spare no effort or resources to resist their agenda. Once we overcome the current crisis, there will be plenty of time to continue our focus on long-term postal reform.

As of today, over 9,000 of the 640,000 plus postal employees are under quarantine. Over 1100 employees have been confirmed positive for the virus, and over 700 more are presumed to be positive. Thankfully most of these employees have recovered from the virus and have returned to work, but it saddens me to report that over 40 employees have died from the virus, including 9 city letter carriers confirmed. Our hearts go out to all their families, loved ones, friends and co-workers.

Despite the current and future uncertainty our entire country is facing, you continue to heroically put on the blue uniform each day and deliver your routes. You should be proud of your service to the citizens of the United States, just as I and all NALC employees are ever so proud to be working for you. Thank you, please stay safe, and God bless each of you and your families.