

**Contract Administration Unit**

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# COVID-19: Current tools and procedures

**A**s the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect our workplace and our lives, it is important to understand the tools and procedures available to reduce transmission and mitigate the harm the virus causes to our community and the workplace. This Contract Talk will summarize the things city carriers should remember, cite the best practices to minimize viral spread and explain where to access important information related to COVID-19. All of this information can be found at [nalc.org/news/covid-19](http://nalc.org/news/covid-19).

## Mask policy

**As of Feb. 17, 2022, the Postal Service mask policy requires** letter carriers to wear a face covering, regardless of vaccination status, when there is a local, state or tribal face-covering order in place, or if social distancing cannot be maintained in the workplace. Carriers should be sure to properly wear a well-fitting mask. If a face covering cannot be worn for medical reasons, carriers should contact their supervisor. All postal facilities should have an adequate supply of masks and face coverings available for employee use.

## Social distancing

**To reduce the spread of the virus, social distancing guidelines** must be observed whenever possible, whether delivering a route or within the workplace. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact (within about six feet) for a prolonged period—15 minutes within a 24-hour period. Avoid close contact with people who are sick and stay at least six feet away from other people, especially if you are at higher risk of getting very sick with COVID-19.

## Cleaning

**Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20** seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Cover your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. Clean high touch surfaces regularly or as needed. If someone is sick or has tested positive for COVID-19, disinfect their frequently touched surfaces. Use a household disinfectant product from the Environmental Protective Agency's List N disinfectants for Coronavirus (COVID-19) according to manufacturer's labeled directions. If surfaces are dirty, clean them using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

## Contact tracing

**Within 24 hours of notice of an employee testing positive for** COVID-19, a USPS occupational health nurse administrator (OHNA) or safety personnel will initiate a close contact investigation. They will interview the employee regarding his or her movements and potential contact with co-workers. If letter carriers are contacted by the OHNA or safety personnel as part of

close contact-tracing protocol, they should provide the information requested and follow the instructions given.

## If you test positive with COVID-19

**Postal employees should notify their immediate supervisor of** a positive finding of COVID-19. They also should provide medical documentation from the treating physician or public health official to the OHNA. Within 24 hours of the notification the employee should be contacted by a USPS nurse or safety official to provide information for contact tracing. Carriers should answer their questions and follow the instructions given regarding the return-to-work protocols.

## COVID-19 and OWCP

**On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American** Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The law makes it easier for federal workers diagnosed with COVID-19 to establish coverage under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA). Letter carriers who tested positive for COVID-19 should consider filing a claim with the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). COVID-19 claims should be filed via the Employees' Compensation and Management Portal (ECOMP). For more information on COVID-19 coverage under the FECA, visit [nalc.org/workplace-issues/injured-on-the-job](http://nalc.org/workplace-issues/injured-on-the-job). Additional reading and information on COVID-19-related OWCP claims can be found in the May 2020 Contract Talk.

## Vaccination

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states** that COVID-19 vaccines are safe, and that they are highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations and death. They were developed using science that has been around for decades. Getting vaccinated is the best way to slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. The CDC recommends that everyone who is eligible stay up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccines, especially people with weakened immune systems. Go to [vaccines.gov](http://vaccines.gov), text your zip code to 438829 or call 1-800-232-0233 to find COVID-19 vaccine locations near you.

## Memorandums of Understanding

**Throughout the pandemic, NALC and USPS have agreed to** various memorandums of understanding (MOUs) related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These MOUs provide extensions of time limits for grievance appeals, workplace changes to promote social distancing, additional leave provisions and the use of temporary carrier assistants. As the pandemic has persisted, the parties have agreed to extend the MOUs as necessary. These agreements can be found in the NALC's Materials Reference System at [nalc.org/workplace-issues/resources/materials-reference-system](http://nalc.org/workplace-issues/resources/materials-reference-system).

**For the latest information related to COVID-19, visit [nalc.org/news/covid-19](http://nalc.org/news/covid-19).** Carriers should contact their shop steward or branch officer if they have additional questions.