

#YATCR Podcast Ep. 11 Transcript

BRIAN RENFROE, NALC EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT:

You are listening to NALC's You are the Current Resident podcast. I'm Brian Renfro, Executive Vice President. This is your podcast for Saturday, April 25th. To begin today's podcast, we want to go to NALC President Fred Rolando for an audio version of his April 25th statement to NALC members updating you on a number of issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. So here is NALC President Fred Rolando with his April 25th statement to NALC members.

FREDRIC ROLANDO, NALC PRESIDENT:

Good morning. This is President Fred Rolando. Today is April 25th, 2020. The entire world continues to navigate through uncharted territory as we work and live through the effects, 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 every 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 a reality. Just this week, the Postal Service 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 could not 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 statewide mandatory orders to wear face coverings include Colorado, Connecticut, Washington, the District of Columbia, 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 we 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 a 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 N95 mask.

If an employee's physician indicates that the use of the N-95 masks 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 to face coverings in masks are mandatory for employees who could not 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 30th, 2020, and you'll see in the Postal Service agreed to implement temporary workplace changes to promote social distancing, that memorandum of understanding directed the local parties to immediately discuss potential scheduling an office setup, changes such as staggered start times, scheduling letter pairs 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 COVID-19@NALC.org. The March 30th Memorandum of Understanding also committed the parties to limiting individuals to working only there, employing off 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 number one. The supervisor and the steward in the losing office will jointly determine which carrier will go to the gate office. Number two, if there is concern from either the loan carrier or those in the gaining office about the loan carrier entering the facility. The mail will be placed on the dock or somewhere outside where it can be loaded without entering the building. And number three, if a loan carrier does not bring a vehicle from a losing office.

The gaining office will have appropriate cleaning supplies for the carrier to sanitize the vehicle that he or she will be using. To be clear, this does not change the fact that the memo states. Letter carriers will work in their employing facility to the extent possible. It simply puts extra precautionary measures into place when a 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 COVID-19@NALC.org.

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

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 Corona virus. Employees can call the COVID-19 Supplies Command Center at 8 4 4 7 7 3 3 5 9 4 Sunday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time. Please also continue to contact us with any questions.

And the 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 unable to contact the NBA office, please contact NALC headquarters at COVID-19@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 LMOUs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first LMOU regarding the signing of overtime lists allows the local parties to mutually elect to develop a signup 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 8 of the National Agreement.

This is due to the potential effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on staffing levels. The second memo you regarding COVID-19 related absences states that beginning February twenty ninth, 2020 such absences will not be considered by managers when they are reviewing the attendance record of employees requesting reassignment under the transfer's memorandum of understanding. Also, with regard to COVID-19 related absences, postal headquarters recently sent messaging to its area representatives stating the following that is now in effect for all NALC represented employees career end or nine career employees who are serving their first 90 workdays with 120 calendar days for She-She days 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 LMOU with regard to temporary expanded sick leave for dependent care and the memorandum on temporary additional paid leave for CCAs all 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. We will remain tirelessly committed on a daily basis to continue to 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 the Postal Service giving them relief or any other necessary appropriations. We've 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 Web site, on the front page and in the government affairs section. Under news and 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 Web site. The Postal Service's existence pre-dates 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, where the two point two trillion dollar 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, the president said that the postal service is a joke and that they should quadruple current package rates. He incorrectly claimed that the Postal Service loses money on every package it delivers for Amazon and other Internet companies, and that he would not sign any legislation that provides financial assistance to the Postal Service.

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 40 percent at any time, 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 by saying, I will never let our postal service 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. Well, we responded with appreciation for the kind words about our members, and we reminded them 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 no resources to resist their agenda. Once we overcome the current crisis, we'll be plenty of time to continue our focus on long term postal reform. As of today, over nine thousand six hundred and forty thousand plus postal employees are under quarantine. Over 11 hundred employees have been confirmed positive for the virus in over seven hundred more are presumed to be positive. Thankfully, most of these employees have recovered from the virus and have returned to work.

But it saddens all of us to report that over 40 employees have died from the virus, including nine 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 delivery 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.

BRIAN RENFROE, NALC EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT:

That was NALC President Fred Rolando with the audio version of his April 25th statement to NALC members want to ask you that if you listen to this, you saw it on the Web site. It's posted there. Please share it with those that you work with. Just so to be sure that everyone has access and is up to date on the latest information that you need out there on a number of topics, as you heard.

I do want to follow up on one topic. You heard President Rolando talk about the Postal Service's newly established supplies command center. This is a group of people and processes put together where they have a number of tasks from overseeing distribution, procurement of supplies. But there's an important piece here for everyone that this is just a new way to report that you don't have the appropriate supplies in addition to all the things that we've been doing for the last few weeks.

So continue to to tell your branch officers your national business agent's office will continue to reach out. A lot of you have used the COVID-19@nalc.org email. Thank you for doing that. But this supplies command center is available to any employee to call. The number is 8 4 4 7 7 3 3 5 9 4. You may call them Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Eastern time. So once again, that number is 8 4 4 7 7 3 3 5 9 4 Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time. We have a question that we want to answer on today's show from Twitter. This is from at Postal Day 4 5 1 1. And Dave's question is, have there been any conversations about trying to gather money for the NALC food drive? The food banks are in dire need of help. Also, are there any conversations about letter carriers delivering food to the needy so they don't have to line up in these huge lines? Dave, thanks for your question.

Have there been conversations about trying to just gather money? Yes, there have been conversations. And we are working diligently on something to sort of possibly replace because of the safety issues related to us conducting the food drive as normal. Find some other way that everyone that otherwise that

normally would would put food out. We would pick food up to give them away, to possibly donate financially to help the food bank. So, yes, that is in the works.

And you'll probably hear more about that coming later.

As for the second part of the question about letter carriers delivering food. Not that we're aware of.

Obviously, that's something that the Postal Service would do. We have explored and thought about and discussed, you know, any way that letter carriers could be used using our network, whether that's delivering food, that's some of the testing that we're going to do with was delivering coronavirus test products to people. So we'll continue to engage the postal service and hopefully any opportunity for us to to use our network to do something like that. We will certainly take advantage of that if it comes along in the future.

Thanks for the question, Dave.

Thank you all for listening. Again, I want to tell you, if you want to submit questions to us and a lot of you have done this and we very much appreciate it. There's a number of ways you can do that. If you do it on social media, we ask you to use the hashtag. YATCRPOD. That's hashtag YATCRPOD. You can find us on social media, on Twitter. We're at NALC_national on Instagram.

We're at letter carriers, on Facebook, we're at NALC.National. You can also find us on YouTube. Our page there is called The Postal Record if you wish to submit a question to us by email. You can do that at social@nalc.org. Of course, the Web site is NALC.org. Any information that you would need about your job or your unions available there? I want to ask you if you use social media, particularly if you use Facebook.

I think we talked about this on a previous episode. But we've created overlays for profile pictures. So if you're a letter carrier, there's one there that identifies you as a letter carrier. If you're not a letter carrier and you wish to show. So your support through on social media for letter carriers and the postal service you could do that's really easy. If you just go to any else's Facebook page, you'll see a a post about it from a few days ago.

But it's really simple. If you go to the Web site, Facebook.com, click on your profile and just hover over your profile picture and you'll see an option to update. Then you click add frame and in the search bar there, just type in national association a letter. Here's and you'll see those two frames come up and you can tune to use as your profile picture, so we encourage you to take advantage of that. I also encourage you to continue using the COVID-19@nalc.org email you can use that to ask questions will be happy to get answers to you.

You can use that to provide information to us on supply's or or any other issue that may be out there. We've gotten hundreds of questions and that have been answered. So that's hopefully been a resource

that you find useful. Well, thanks again, everyone, for listening. And until we talk to you again, please stay safe.