

President Ronnie Stutts' Message to the NRLCA Membership

Our world has dramatically changed, especially over the course of the last few weeks. The COVID-19 virus continues to spread at an alarming rate and it is apparent that this pandemic will be affecting our communities for weeks and months to come.

It is critical that all of us follow the guidance from the Postal Service via mandatory safety talks and from public health officials at the Centers for Disease Control and state and local health departments. I recognize that this guidance has been changing, often from one day to the next, but we must all carefully follow the most current safeguards and precautions in order to protect our families, the public we serve, and ourselves.

The CDC encourages all Americans to take the following measures to further prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Practice social distancing. To the extent possible, keep a distance of at least 6 feet from others.
- If a customer approaches your vehicle or any boxes that you are serving, kindly ask them to keep back at least 6 feet. This also includes door delivery.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces at work and at home.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60-percent alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Stay home when you are sick.

We have been in constant communication with Postmaster General Megan Brennan and other management officials to discuss the Postal Service's response to COVID-19 and the issues we believe are paramount to the safety and health of all rural carriers. This morning in a teleconference, I implored the PMG to communicate more with Postal employees and also to work with a variety of media outlets to let the public know to keep an appropriate distance from delivery personnel in order to protect the health and safety of all of us. We are advised that hiring efforts will continue but that orientation classes

may be smaller to allow for social distancing. Changes are also taking place with driver training. The numbers in training academies will also be reduced so the trainers and class attendees can keep at least 6 feet apart.

Supplies and Equipment

The Postal Service has committed to making available to rural carriers alcohol-based hand sanitizers and other supplies for personal hygiene purposes and to clean surfaces in and around the work area, including in your delivery vehicle. The CDC does not recommend the use of masks for people who are not sick. However, the Postal Service has agreed to provide masks and nitrile gloves to any rural carrier who requests them. If these supplies and equipment are not available in your installation, please request them from your manager and contact your ADR or DR so that we can know where problems with our internal supply-chain exist. As of this morning's teleconference with the PMG, it is clear that the Postal Service was unaware of the many offices around the country where these supplies and equipment were not available to employees. I will call the PMG as often as necessary until these supplies and equipment reach every installation with rural delivery. The health and safety of our craft is of paramount importance.

Interactions with the Public and the Mail

While we serve the public on a daily basis, the Postal Service has developed mandatory safety talks with our input to help rural carriers practice appropriate social distancing while still delivering and collecting the mail. Use the temporary modifications to the customer signature capture procedures for the MDD and any forms or receipt items usually signed by customers. Do not use customer doorbells. Instead, knock on customer doors and avoid areas that may be frequently touched. It is possible to be both courteous to the customer and to ask them to maintain a safe distance from you while performing customer services.

Some rural carriers have expressed concerns about whether they can contract COVID-19 through touching the mail. Please know that The Centers for Disease Control has said that the virus is spread through respiratory droplets and there is currently no evidence to support the transmission of COVID-19 with imported goods. The CDC has said, "In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures."

Leave if Quarantined

Some rural carriers may be identified by public health officials as having had contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. In these cases, the rural carrier should be paid administrative leave for the duration of any required quarantine period. Please let your supervisor and ADR or DR know if you are asked to quarantine for this reason so that your fellow Postal employees and your community can be better protected.

In some states and local jurisdictions, government officials have identified groups of people that should self-quarantine, including individuals over a certain age or with certain pre-existing health conditions. As postal employees working for a mission critical government employer, rural carriers are not subject to these local and state quarantine mandates. However, rural carriers who chose to self-quarantine for these reasons may use sick leave.

If you believe you have been exposed to COVID-19 at home or at work, immediately contact your health care provider and follow the instructions you receive. It is imperative that you stay home to protect your co-workers and the public until you are cleared to return to work.

Child Care

The spread of COVID-19 has caused the cancelation of day care programs and public and private schools across the country and unavailability of private child care providers. Therefore, tens of millions of school-age children must be at home and must engage in appropriate social distancing practices. All of the unions entered into MOUs with the Postal Service allowing employees to use Sick Leave for Dependent Care for needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Any leave used for COVID-19 related reasons between February 29, 2020 and May 17, 2020 may not be cited in any discipline for failure to maintain a regular schedule.

Special Provisions for RCA Sick Leave

The NRLCA and Postal Service reached agreement on a temporary MOU providing up to 80 hours of paid leave for certain circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including, for example, the employee has been infected with the virus or has been directly exposed to someone who has tested positive, the employee has been experiencing symptoms consistent with a COVID-19 diagnosis or recently visited a level 3 country as determined by the CDC. RCA's can also use this leave for childcare as noted in the above paragraph.

Union Meetings

The NRLCA website will continue to publish a list of meeting cancellations and postponements. Please understand that this list is rapidly changing so please contact your local or state officers if in doubt. We have strongly encouraged all states to cancel or postpone meetings whenever possible and have been providing regular guidance to state presidents through email messages and teleconferences. The next teleconference for state presidents is this Thursday, March 26. We know that guidance from the CDC and state and local public health authorities will force the cancellation of some state conventions. We continue to work with these states and to closely monitor the latest public health developments as well as guidance from the Department of Labor. Our National Convention is still scheduled for August in Spokane, Washington, one of the states

hardest hit by the virus. We will be in touch with public health officials in Washington State in the coming weeks in order to see whether the Convention may be impacted.

The entire National Board thanks you for your incredible dedication to your jobs, the Postal Service, and to this Union. We live in uncertain times, but I know that the rural carriers of this country are doing their part to help our Nation get through this unprecedented public health crisis by providing critical lifesaving supplies and medicines to the customers they serve. We are here for you and will continue to advocate for you. Please check the NRLCA website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts regularly. Also, please consider downloading the NRLCA app and allow for push notifications to your mobile device. The MOUs mentioned above have been posted to our website. We want to stay in touch with you. If you have concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to reach out for a state officer, ADR or DR, or one of us.