

# The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the  
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Floor Edition

Update by: Jackie Engelhart

## Confirmed Cases...

I was informed today that Lakeland has 20 cases and Palatine P&DC has 7 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Busse has two cases and Carol Stream has no confirmed cases but has some employees who are in quarantine due to being exposed by a family member who tested positive. The Lakeland District has informed the union of employees testing positive in at least four 600 offices but the Central District failed to inform us when at least two employees tested positive in a 601 office. We learned this from the Clerks, many of whom are self-quarantining. Some Associate Offices now have plexi-glass or clear plastic curtains at the window to protect the window clerks and the window customers. **Personal Protection Management** is supposed to have sufficient hand sanitizer, wipes and additional cleaning supplies as well as more cleaning in the heavily used areas of the office. If you are out of any needed supplies, ask your supervisor to get more, and call the union.

## Corona Virus Cleaning

Influenza viruses may live up to 48 hours on hard surfaces. To control the spread of respiratory viruses such as coronaviruses and influenza in postal facilities additional cleaning of frequently touched surfaces is required. The spread of such viruses increase when employees touch contaminated surfaces and then touch their noses, mouths, and eyes.

## Cloth Face Coverings

The Center for Disease Control now recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. They advise the use of simple face cloth coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus but do not know it from transmitting it to others. The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders. Face masks should be available to all postal employees in all post offices.

## Most Important

The most important thing during this pandemic is to stay home when you are sick and or have any of the COVID-19 symptoms, which are fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

The second thing is social distancing by staying six feet away from each other. The third thing is to wash our hands for 20 seconds and or use hand sanitizers.

## Dependent Care

Employees may use sick leave for dependent care in the event they must care for a child as a result of daycare and school closing or lack of a caregiver. This does not change the limit of 80 hours that can be used in a calendar year. Approval is subject to the normal procedures for sick leave approval.

## Temporary Additional Paid Leave for PSEs

PSEs will be allotted 80 hours of paid leave to use in these circumstances:

1. Employee has COVID-19 or been exposed.
2. Employee has visited any country identified as level 3 by the CDC.
3. Employee returns from a trip on a cruise ship with an identified case.
4. Employee has symptoms associated with COVID-19.

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Jackie Engelhart  
President  
Walter Elerby Jr.  
Vice President  
Alan Czerwinski  
News Director

## Special points of interest:

Confirmed Cases...  
Personal Protection  
Corona Virus Cleaning  
Cloth Face Coverings  
Most Important  
Dependent Care  
Temporary Additional  
Paid Leave for PSEs  
The Families First Coronavirus  
Response Act (FFCRA)  
FMLA Expansion  
Leave Control Staffing

Northwest Illinois Area Local  
American Postal Workers Union  
194 W. Lake Street  
Elmhurst, IL 60126  
Phone: 630-833-0088  
Fax: 630-833-0248  
Email: [nwial7140@yahoo.com](mailto:nwial7140@yahoo.com)  
Web: [nwial7140ayahoo.com](http://nwial7140ayahoo.com)

## **The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)**

Effective 4-1-2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act provides employees with two additional types of leave. These new leave entitlements are in addition to leave you are already entitled to under the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM) and any applicable Memorandum of Understandings. As a postal employee you have certain rights under this Act recently signed into law. These provisions will apply from 4-1-2020 until the end of the year.

### **Emergency Sick Leave 80 hours**

Employees are eligible to use up to 80 hours of emergency paid sick leave based on average number of hours worked in a 2-week period. This leave is available to both career and non-career employees regardless of tenure. The reasons for which an employee may use Emergency Sick Leave:

1. To comply with a Federal, State or local quarantine order related to COVID-19, or to care for someone who is;
2. To self-quarantine based on health care provider's advice, or care for someone who has been advised to self-quarantine related to COVID;
3. To seek medical care related to symptoms of COVID-19 symptoms and obtain a medical diagnosis;
4. To care for his or her child whose school or place of care is closed (or childcare provider is unavailable due to COVID-19 related reasons).

### **FMLA Expansion**

Employees may also use FMLA to care for children under 18 whose school or place of care is closed due to COVID-19. The entitlement is available to career and non-career employees after 30 days of employment.

1. As with other qualifying reasons, and employee who is

eligible for this type of leave can take up to 12 weeks of FMLA protected leave in a calendar year. If an employee has already exhausted all 12 weeks for a different qualifying reason, no additional FMLA leave is provided under this Act.

2. The first 2 weeks of this leave are unpaid, unless an employee chooses to substitute other types of paid leave.
3. The following 10 weeks will be paid leave at 2/3 of an employee's normal pay, but in no event more than \$200 a day, or \$10,000 in the aggregate.

Both leave entitlement types can be used sequentially to avoid 2 weeks of unpaid leave if employees elect to do so. This legislation is meant to ensure that workers are not forced to choose between their paychecks and the public health measures needed to combat the COVID-19 virus. Additional details about the act's provisions and other COVID-19 information can be found on the special COVID-19 pages of the USPS internal website, Blue, and the employee website, LiteBlue. For additional questions please contact the HR Shared Service Center at 1-877-477-3273, select Option 5. The 2 weeks is paid at 100% and can be used for self or dependent care. The additional 10 weeks is for dependent care and cannot be used for self. If an employee has used up part or all of their FMLA entitlement for 2020 they are not eligible for this additional 10 weeks. If they have not used up their FMLA entitlement for 2020 they are entitled to whatever portion they have not used. Again, the 10 weeks of added paid leave is for dependent care and is available for employees who have not used up their 12 weeks of FMLA. Management may request documentation for these absences.

## **Lakeland District Proactive**

Of the three Districts that we represent, Lakeland for 600 offices, Central for 601 offices, and the Chicago District for Busse Hub, Lakeland has been the only district to reach out to the unions in a proactive manner and to contact us when an employee in an office we represent, tests positive. We have heard nothing from the Central IL and Chicago Districts. Richard Moreton is the District Manager for the 15,000 employees in Lakeland and he has been proactive during this pandemic. A/Plant Manager Allen Mitchell has held several meetings with Palatine employees to inform them regarding all positive cases and other updated information. Carol Stream has not reported any positive cases but Plant Manager Pam Bronson has met with small groups of employees on the floor to keep them generally informed. Since postal workers are required to report to work during this pandemic if they are able to, they should be provided with all recommended personal protective items and should be kept informed by postal management in their respective office and or installation. Some of our co-workers are sick and in the hospital so we all wish them a full and speedy recovery. Any employee with an underlying health condition and or a compromised immune system is more at risk and should consult with their doctor to decide whether or not to report to work as cases increase. No employee should be sent to an office where an employee has tested positive unless they are informed and they volunteer to go.

### **Leave Control Staffing...**

Leave Control should be staffed so employees can walk in or call in to request paid leave for COVID-19 related reasons and other leave. If not, call your Union Office or the Union Hall.

