

USPS Media Statement – COVID-19

April 29, 2020

The United States Postal Service is proud of the work our more than 600,000 employees play in processing, transporting, and delivering mail and packages for the American public. We provide a vital public service that is a part of this nation's critical infrastructure. The Postal Service has a dedicated Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Command Response leadership team that is focusing on employee and customer safety in conjunction with operational and business continuity during this unprecedented epidemic. We continue to follow the strategies and measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and public health departments. The CDC has information available on its website at <https://www.coronavirus.gov> that provides the latest information about COVID-19.

To reduce health risks for our employees and customers and to safeguard our operational and business continuity, the Postal Service is doing the following:

- Ensuring millions of face coverings, including masks, gloves and cleaning and sanitizing products are available and distributed to more than 30,000 locations every day through our Postal Service supply chain. We also have opened up local purchasing authorities and sourcing options so that our employees can access additional supplies within the communities they serve. We have expanded our national sourcing of supplies and services to ensure that increasing demands are met.
- Recommending that Postal Service employees wear face coverings while at work, when proper social distancing cannot be achieved,
- Requiring Postal Service employees to use face coverings while at work in our retail facilities in local and state jurisdictions that have implemented orders requiring use of face coverings by individuals within those jurisdictions.
- Requesting customers use face coverings while in our retail facilities located in jurisdictions that have implemented orders requiring use of face coverings by individuals within those jurisdictions.
- Reinforcing workplace behaviors to ensure that contact among our employees and with our customers reflects the best guidance regarding healthy interactions, social distancing, and risk minimization. We have implemented measures at retail facilities and mail processing facilities to ensure appropriate social distancing, including through signage, floor tape, and "cough/sneeze" barriers. We have changed delivery procedures to eliminate the requirement that customers sign our Mobile Delivery Devices for delivery. For increased safety, employees will politely ask the customer to step back a safe distance or close the screen door/door so that they may leave the item in the mail receptacle or appropriate location by the customer door.
- Updated our cleaning policies to ensure that all cleaning occurs in a manner consistent with CDC guidance relating to this pandemic.

- Updated our leave policies to allow liberal use of leave and to therefore give our employees the ability to stay home whenever they feel sick, must provide dependent care, or any other qualifying factor under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. We have entered into agreements with our unions to provide 80 hours of paid leave to non-career employees for issues related to COVID-19, and have expanded the definition of sick leave for dependent care for covered employees to deal with the closures of primary and secondary schools across the country.
- Expanded the use of telework for those employees who are able to perform their jobs remotely.
- Issuing a daily cadence of employee talks, articles, videos, and other communications to ensure employees have the latest information and guidance.
- Leveraging localized continuity of operations plans that can be employed in the case of emergencies to help ensure that the nation's postal system continues to function for the American people. With a longstanding history of quickly adapting its operational plans to changing conditions, the Postal Service maintains steady communications with mailers during natural disasters or other events that require emergency responses and advises residential customers and business mailers with regard to postal facility disruptions that may impact delivery in an affected area via its USPS Service Alerts webpage at: <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/service-alerts/>.

The Postal Service delivers much needed medications and Social Security checks, and we are the leading delivery service for online purchases. The Postal Service is an essential service for purposes of compliance with state or municipality shelter-in-place orders or other social distancing restrictions. The statute that created the Postal Service begins with the following sentence: "The United States Postal Service shall be operated as a basic and fundamental service provided to the people by the Government of the United States, authorized by the Constitution, created by an Act of Congress, and supported by the people." 39 U.S.C. §101(a).

According to the CDC, the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). "COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly through close contact from person-to-person in respiratory droplets from someone who is infected." (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html>) The CDC recognizes that while it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#How-COVID-19-Spreads>) And importantly, the CDC and the United States Surgeon General have indicated that it is unlikely that COVID-19 is being spread through the mail due to the poor survivability of these types of coronavirus on surfaces.