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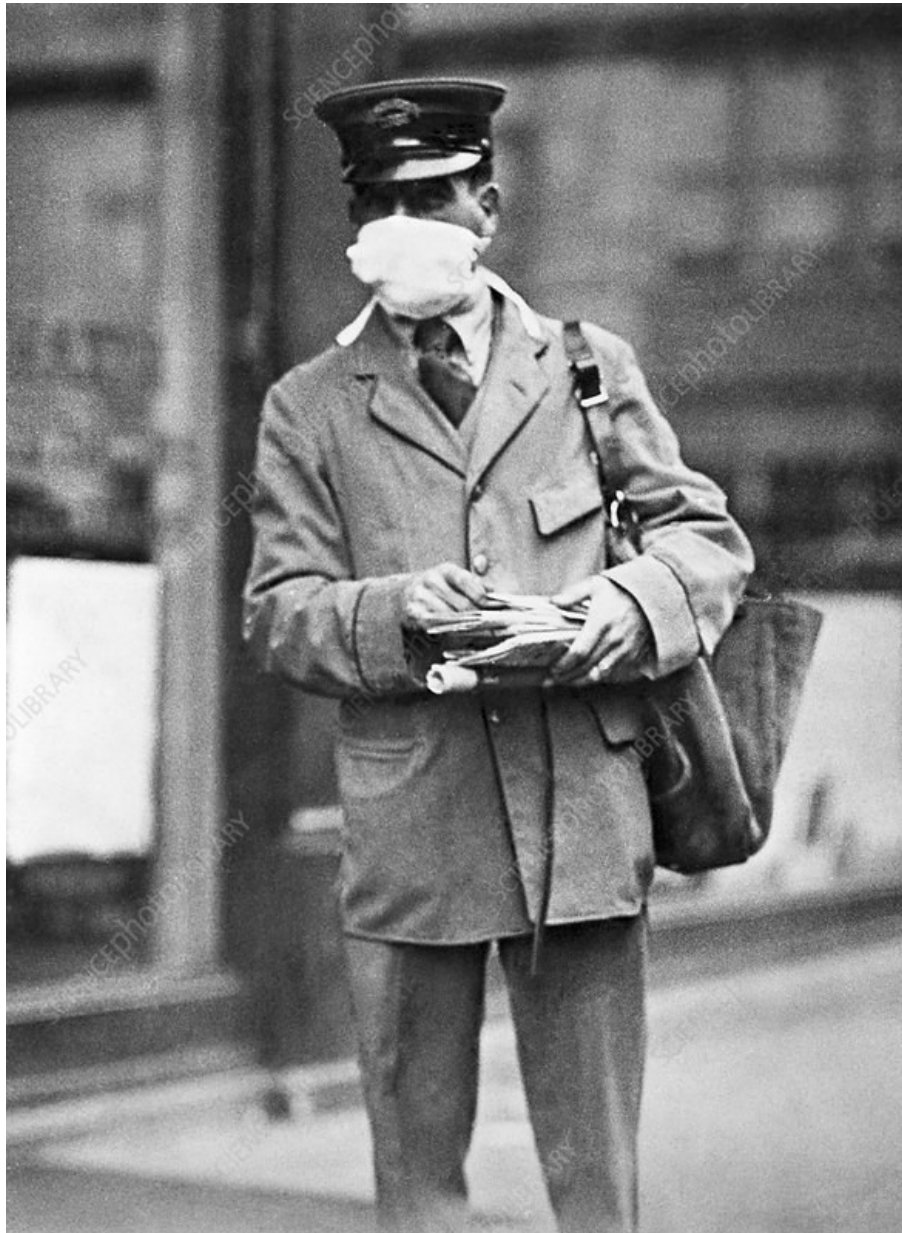
BRANCH 111 N.A.L.C.
"THE WASATCH BRANCH"



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Midvale - Millcreek -Murray - Northwest - Orem - Sandy - South Salt Lake - Sugarhouse - Tooele - West Jordan - West Valley



The President's Report

Staying Calm in a Pandemic

First, my thanks goes to the Letter Carriers of Branch 111 who have been working through the worst global event that most of us have ever experienced. The hours have been long, we have been faced with some sobering situations, and I could not be more proud of our Branch members who are on the figurative front lines serving our community. There is a reason why we have to swear an oath in order to serve as Letter Carriers, and Letter Carriers are literally fulfilling that oath during this time of crisis. The CDC refers to us as “Mission Critical”, “Critical Infrastructure”, and “Essential Service”. We deliver medicine, food, checks, and many late-night online impulse purchases; Which amounts to a great deal of the things that people need when following the “Stay at Home” directive.

The Coronavirus Pandemic is something that is unprecedented in our lifetime. We have to go back 102 years to find something similar, and that was the Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1919. This will be considered a “historic” time in the future, and we will all have stories to tell about delivering the mail during the Pandemic of 2020.

I have been receiving many phone calls relating to the Coronavirus Pandemic, and I thought I would take some space here, and try to answer some of those questions as best I can for the benefit of the entire membership. As you might imagine, it seems that the rules are changing every day, sometimes multiple times a day, so this information may become outdated at some point, but it is the information that we have at the moment, and the best thing we can do is get good information to the right people, so that they can make good decisions, and do so as quickly as possible.

Q: How safe is it to be at work right now?

A: The postal service has implemented heightened cleaning protocols for all offices, and in the event of a positive Covid-19 test, they perform an initial deep clean, and continue to clean with further enhanced protocols. Employees have been instructed to practice social distancing (6-feet separation at all times) and are instructed to wash/sanitize their hands any time they touch a public surface, avoid touching their mouth/eye/nose with their hands, and to stay at home if they are sick. With all of that being followed (in addition to other protocols to avoid congregating at work), we consider the risk level to be low for contracting the Coronavirus at work. As of the writing of this article (4-11-20), there have been no cases of work-related transmission of Covid-19 within any office represented by Branch 111.

Q: If I get sick, what should I do?

A: If you become ill, stay at home. Inform management of your situation, both by calling the Interactive Voice Response system (877-477-3273), and we encourage you to contact your Supervisor to let them know that you are ill and will keep them informed of when you can come back (we encourage you to inform them if you are seeking a Covid-19 test as well). If you do get a Covid-19 test and the test is positive, you are encouraged to call your supervisor and let them know so that they can implement the heightened cleaning protocols for your office. The CDC may take several days to contact the Post Office with those results, which is counter-productive to the required sanitization that needs to take place. The Postal Service will not release your name (It is against the law for them to do so). We should keep them informed to protect our fellow workers.

Q: Do I have to use my own sick leave to be sick or be quarantined?

A: There are many options available to Letter Carriers during the pandemic. You can always use your own leave to be away from work. Also, the NALC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the USPS granting CCAs 80 hours of additional leave that may be used for issues relating to the Pandemic. After that agreement, Congress passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (We will include a copy in this edition of the Pavement Pounder), which grants 80 hours of additional paid sick leave to all employees to deal with issues regarding the Pandemic (Please see the Families First Coronavirus Response Act for the details), and also grants up to 12 weeks of additional leave to care for children whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable). In short, if you are unable to be at work due to issues relating to the pandemic, you should communicate those issues to the Union and to Management; There are options available to you.

Q: Will the Post Office shut down if too many Letter Carriers get sick, or if too many people are absent?

A: The Post Office will not shut down during the Pandemic. We are “Critical Infrastructure”, and we will continue to deliver mail as long as it is possible to do so. If we have too many people off work, decisions may have to be made as to what gets delivered, and we may see a day where we are only delivering packages, or perhaps only medicine, but hopefully it doesn’t come to that.

Q: What can I do to be more safe?

A: Wash or sanitize your hands frequently, frequently, and even more frequently. Especially if you have touched something that is “public”, or in other words, that other people could have touched. Avoid touching your face unless you have clean hands. And practice social distancing (6 feet separation in all directions) whenever possible. This includes customers. Try the phrase: “Please, we have new rules at the Post Office and we are required to stay at least 6 feet away from Patrons, Thank you!”, as opposed to “Back off!”, and we encourage you to maintain social distancing when you are off work as well. It is counter-productive to go home and have a party with 10 friends in your living room, while practicing social distancing at work, and you may be placing your work family in jeopardy by doing so.

Please stay home if you are sick, and please be at work if you are healthy. Please follow the safety guidelines I have mentioned in this article. And please communicate any concerns or questions to both the Union, and to Management so we can get the right information to the right people so that they can make the best decisions under the circumstances. We will get through this trying time. Thanks again for all your efforts! One person said at a Stand-up: you can’t control everything, but you can control your own actions, so do what you can to be safe. Please stay safe!

Michael Wahlquist

President

Branch 111, NALC

TOGETHER

As I sit writing this I am trying to think of an event in my lifetime that has been more difficult. I can't think of one. There has been horrible acts of terrorism, senseless mass shootings, and devastating natural disasters but nothing that I can think of that has directly affected every single American, every human being.

I want to remind everyone about EAP. The Employee Assistance Program is available to all USPS employees and their families. During this difficult time EAP is a lifeline you can use for many reasons. Many of you are lucky enough to be able to go to work and have loved ones to return home to at the end of the day. Some of you have different circumstances. Some are unable to work, some are retired, and some are single parents who face very difficult challenges. Isolation is the biggest triggering factor to those suffering from depression and those battling substance abuse. We need to look out for each other. I challenge everyone who reads this to check in with your office's retirees. Reach out to that person who you know may be struggling to stay positive, stay sober, is alone, or that person who is so overwhelmed trying to balance a full day of work and keeping their kids caught up with home school. A five minute phone call could change someone's outlook on the day. I know because I struggle too. I sincerely thank those people who have checked in with me.

My point is that we are in this together. I know some people may think that that is silly. Please, however you feel about this whole situation we find ourselves in, respect other people's feelings. People are nervous, they have the right to be.

In Solidarity
Mike Hansen
Vice President
NALC Branch 111

AFL-CIO Convention nominations were suppose to happen in the April meeting. It is assumed at this time that the Convention like all other events is being postponed until further notice.

Branch 111 officer elections are coming up at the end of the year. Nominations will be held in the October meeting.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act guidance

Effective April 1, 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) 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 Understanding (MOUs).

As a postal employee, you have certain rights under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act recently signed into law. These provisions will apply from April 1, 2020, through the end of the year.

Emergency Sick Leave (up to 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 include:

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

There are pay rate limitations associated with this leave type; please go to Blue or Light Blue to get more details.

Family Medical Leave Act Expansion

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

- As with other qualifying reasons, an 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.

- The first 2 weeks of this leave are unpaid, unless an employee chooses to substitute other types of paid leave.
- 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. Your health and well-being are our top priority.

Additional details about the act's provisions and other COVID-19 information can be found on the special COVID-19 pages of our internal website, Blue, and our employee website, LiteBlue. For additional questions please contact the HR Shared Service Center at 1-877-477-3273 and select Option 5.

Stay safe. Thank you for listening, and thank you for your professionalism, commitment, and for all you do for our customers, your co-workers and the Postal Service.



Your Home Financing Resource

The Union Plus Mortgage Program provides:

- Special benefits for union members, their parents and children
- Educational tools to help you prepare for homeownership
- A wide range of financing option from Wells Fargo Home Mortgage



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Retiree Roundup

Well here we sit. All in our homes. Probably a little stir crazy, feeling a bit isolated, lonely. Certainly a strange time. Those of us that are old enough to be retired have seen some history. The assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and Dr. King. Wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. The Beirut bombing and 9/1. The Cold War. Some of the oldest retired members remember the Depression, WW2 and Korea. But nothing like this.

I would say that we survived all of that history. We WILL survive this as well. Americans and humanity will get through this. The virus will ultimately lose. I choose to remember the good things. The people, places and activities that bring me happiness. My wife, children and grandkids. Camping and riding a ATV. Working out in the yard. I also have always enjoyed doing the Union work and have wonderful friends that I became acquainted with through the N.A.L.C.

So choose to be happy. I learned the hard way years ago that except for death, there's someone in a worse situation. So again, be happy. That's enough of my rather primitive philosophy.

I would like to say on behalf of all the retired members of Branch 111, we thank the active Letter Carriers who are showing up to work each day in these trying times. You are acting with selflessness and courage. Each of you deserve a Letter Carrier cheer at the very least. Thank you all.

Finally, I unfortunately have had to postpone the Retiree's Dinner that was to be held on April 29. Many of us retired members look forward this event. It is NOT cancelled, just postponed. It would have been foolish to continue with the plan, when many of the retired members are high risk, even if the stay at home orders expire and the restaurant reopened. The dinner will be rescheduled when it is safe to do so.

Be safe, take care of yourselves and your families. This will pass. So choose to be happy. Thank you.

Jeff Asay

Director of Retirees

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The financial records of the Union are available to be looked at by any Branch 111 member, in the Union Office, by appointment.

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