

Memorandum



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

State of New York

Date March 6, 2020

To All MTA Employees

From Patrick T. Warren, Chief Safety Officer
Anita Miller, Chief Employee Relations and Administrative Officer
Daria Luisi, PhD, MPH, Corporate Occupational Health Officer

Re Frequently Asked Questions Regarding COVID-19

This communication is intended to provide additional information to keep our employees informed. This is a rapidly changing situation and we will endeavor to keep you up to date. The health and safety of our employees, their families and our customers is our foremost concern. We hope you find the below FAQ helpful.

1. What should I do if I've traveled to a country with a CDC advisory?

It is essential that all employees who are returning from travel to any of the countries with CDC advisories contact Human Resources *before* returning to work. The CDC lists are updated frequently at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

2. What should I do if I'm concerned about contracting COVID-19?

There currently isn't a vaccine available, or antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19. The best defense against COVID-19 is good hygiene. Taking simple steps can help prevent the spread of any respiratory virus, including:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap is effective at dissolving the outer layer of the COVID-19 virus, which kills it. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. It is especially important to clean hands after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, including your cell phone and computer.
- Avoid handling frequently touched objects while eating hand-held foods like chips, sandwiches or pizza.

3. **Should I get a flu vaccine?**

Medical experts encourage you to get your flu shot — and it's not too late. Although the flu shot will not protect you from COVID-19, it will help prevent the flu which has similar symptoms to this coronavirus. Occupational Health Services has expanded the hours at the seven Medical Facilities for NYCT and MTA Bus, Metro-North and Long Island Railroad to better accommodate employees' schedules. Please go to your Agency website for the new hours, which will be in effect until March 31, 2020.

4. **Should I wear a mask to work?**

No. At this time, masks are not being recommended by the relevant medical governmental authorities. **Please be advised that this is a rapidly evolving situation and may require updates.**

5. **I understand that masks are not recommended, but can I wear a mask if I want to?**

Current medical guidance indicates that respiratory masks do not protect healthy people – they are designed to keep infected people from spreading the virus to others. US Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams has warned the public that not only are facemasks not effective in preventing the general public from contracting the virus, you actually might *increase* your risk of infection if facemasks are not used properly.

In addition, it is currently understood that the virus is transmitted through droplets, not through the air. This means you cannot randomly breathe it in and that the standard surgical masks you see most people wearing will not help. Surgical-type masks are designed to keep droplets in so as to prevent the intended wearer (usually health care providers) from getting others sick, not to keep droplets out.

The US Surgeon General now warns that the panicked purchasing of facemasks is causing an additional health concern by creating a severe shortage of masks available for the purpose intended, thereby putting health care providers and their communities at even greater risk.

Facemasks are only recommended if directed by a health care provider. Since masks are not medically necessary as a protection against COVID-19, and not part of the authorized uniform, they should not be worn by employees during work hours.

6. **Will I be allowed to wear a mask if I have asthma or some other medical condition?**

Yes. If you have an underlying medical condition which would otherwise make wearing a mask appropriate, it is permitted. If you have such a medical condition, please contact your appropriate Human Resources or Labor Relations representative about requesting an accommodation.

7. **Can I wear my own gloves to work?**

Yes, you may wear your own gloves at work if you so choose.

8. What should a manager/supervisor do if an employee wears a mask at work?

If a manager/supervisor is made aware of an employee wearing a mask, they should tell the employee that masks may not be worn by employees during work hours and explain the reasons detailed above. The manager/supervisor should also reiterate the good hygiene steps that can be taken to help prevent contracting or spreading COVID-19.

9. What are reliable sources for information pertaining to COVID-19?

As this situation is rapidly changing, it is very important to stay informed. All employees are advised to continually consult federal, state and city agency websites for reliable information. These include the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>), State Department of Health's (<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus>) and the NYC Health Department (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/health-topics/novel-respiratory-viruses.page>).

10. What should I do if I am feeling stressed or overwhelmed by the potential COVID-19 outbreak?

Emotional reactions to stressful situations such as feeling anxious, overwhelmed or sad, or having trouble sleeping, are normal. If you are feeling distressed, please contact your Agency's employee assistance program at the following:

NYC Transit: (347) 643-7376
Bridges & Tunnels: (800) 833-8707
LIRR: (516) 248-3434
Metro-North: (212) 883-8084
HQ: (212) 883-8084
Construction & Development: (212) 883-8084

For your convenience, each Agency's Human Resources Department can be reached at:

NYC Transit: Jennifer Franceschini (347) 643-8466
MTA Bus: Marlene Masiello (718) 696-3643
Bridges & Tunnels: Patrick Smith (646) 252-7198
LIRR: Janett Ramos (347) 494-6281
Metro-North: Gary Martens (212) 340-2297
HQ: Michael A. Kalish (212) 878 1036
Construction & Development: Luz Pacheco (646) 252-3524

Memorandum



Date: March 8, 2020
To: All MTA Employees
From: Paul Fama, Chief People Officer
Re: COVID-19

As you are aware from our past communications, news outlets and social media, there are many issues that impact all of us regarding the outbreak of COVID-19. Please know that our team is fully engaged in tracking every aspect of COVID-19 with all local, state and national medical experts. This team is dedicated to providing our employees with accurate and medically validated information. As this situation continues to evolve rapidly, we ask your patience as we do our best to communicate as soon as we have new information in an effort to keep all of you and our customers as safe as possible.

We are listening to your concerns and the following are updates of the latest information we have gathered:

- Kronos Clocks – We have heard concerns from many employees about the use of biometrics on the time clocks. We understand your concerns and are looking into this issue. Until then, please continue to use the clocks and continue to use the same precautions, as you do when you touch door handles and other surfaces. We recommend that you wash your hands afterwards. Kronos clocks and employee work areas are regularly cleaned.
- Guidance on Working Hours - Unless advised by your supervisor, all work at the MTA will continue as scheduled, subject to all existing policies. We will evaluate this continuously. We know that in every emergency situation we have an obligation to our customers AND to our employees to ensure safe operations.
- Masks and Gloves - As stated previously, masks and gloves are not recommended unless they are part of current PPE. However, any employee may choose to wear gloves and masks, if they have underlying medical conditions or if this makes them more comfortable during this time. Any gloves and masks that are not part of PPE would be provided by the employee.
- For all employees, we encourage you to revisit guidelines and policies written to keep you safe on the job. These will be reviewed and updated whenever guidance from our public health community requires a change.
- All employees need to report to their supervisor/manager any travel plans, personal and professional, to ensure that we understand and reduce our risks from domestic and international exposure.

- We encourage you to monitor reliable websites, such as the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC) and the New York State [Department of Health](#) (DOH), for information. For MTA updates, please go the dedicated employee [COVID-19 webpage](#), accessible only through the MTA intranet.
- All employees must continue to abide by MTA's Equal Employment Opportunity and anti-harassment policies. The anxiety around the virus is not an excuse to discriminate or harass anyone due to their national origin or any other protected characteristic.

Thank you all for your dedication to ensure that the MTA provides safe and reliable public transportation services, especially during times like these.

Memorandum



Date March 6, 2020

To Agency Presidents
Agency Human Resources Leads
Agency Labor Relations Leads
Occupational Health Services

From Paul Fama, Chief People Officer



Re Triage Procedure for Suspected COVID-19 Cases

As the COVID-19 virus spreads, it is likely that we will see an increase in employees reporting relevant symptoms. The below are the general steps that should be taken by supervisors/managers/crew assignment centers, Human Resources and Occupational Health Services (OHS) so potential COVID-19 cases are handled properly and consistently. **As this is a rapidly evolving situation, MTA may need to develop different protocols on short notice or act at the direction of federal, state and local health authorities.**

- 1) Employee informs supervisor/manager/crew assignment center that they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough and shortness of breath) or are otherwise concerned that they may have COVID-19

Supervisor/Manager/Crew Assignment Center Actions: If an employee working on MTA premises informs a supervisor /manager/crew assignment center that they have flu-like symptoms or has general concerns that they may have come into contact with COVID-19, the supervisor/manager/crew assignment center should direct the employee to leave work and immediately call the applicable Human Resources Department representative listed here. Please provide the HR representative with the employee's name, contact information and employee ID number. Inform the employee that HR will reach out to them directly and make it clear that the information they have shared will be kept strictly confidential, and only shared as necessary under the circumstances.

NYC Transit: Jennifer Franceschini (347) 643-8466

MTA Bus: Marlene Masiello (718) 696-3643

Bridges & Tunnels: Patrick Smith (646) 252-7198

LIRR: Janett Ramos (347) 494-6281

Metro-North: Gary Martens (212) 340-2297

HQ: Michael A. Kalish (212) 878 1036

Construction & Development: Luz Pacheco (646) 252-3524

2) Human Resources is informed about a suspected COVID-19 case

Human Resources Actions: If Human Resources is informed of an employee who may have contracted or been exposed to COVID-19, Human Resources must ask them for the employee's name, contact information and employee ID number.

Next, Human Resources will contact the employee and explain why they are calling. Human Resources must explain that all information will be kept confidential and only shared as necessary under the circumstances. Human Resources will work with the employee to complete a Confidential MTA Employee Questionnaire (Link appears at the end of this directive). Please be as detailed as possible. If the employee has not yet seen their health care provider, Human Resources will advise them to reach out to the health care provider for guidance. The employee should remain out of work until a medical provider states that they may return to work and OHS approves. Human Resources should encourage employees to stay in touch with additional information or if their condition changes.

After the Employee Questionnaire is completed, Human Resources will send the document to the appropriate representative at OHS listed below.

NYC Transit/B&T: 347-643-8299
LIRR: 347-494-6283
C&D/MNR/MTAHQ: 212-499-4720

If supervisors/managers become aware of a consultant/vendor employee working on MTA premises or with MTA employees who may have contracted or been exposed COVID-19, they must contact Human Resources with the name of the consultant/vendor employee. Human Resources will work with Legal, Safety and OHS and communicate, as appropriate, with the consultant/vendor, and take additional steps.

3) Occupational Health Services is informed of a potential COVID-19 case in an MTA employee

OHS Actions: OHS will promptly review all completed Employee Questionnaires received using the current federal, state and local guidance available. OHS will reach out to the appropriate HR representative and/or the employee with any follow up questions.

Based on the responses to the Employee Questionnaire, OHS may contact the employee's health care provider to discuss actions to be taken or whether the employee should undergo COVID-19 testing. OHS should contact the relevant health authorities and coordinate with them.

If OHS is informed that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, OHS shall contact the MTA Safety Department immediately to coordinate any necessary actions such as cleaning or disinfecting.

Employee Questionnaire Link:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=gHPAeZjMvUGAawrpJViPZgtYwTyWPSJCnP5ORjvQXCvUOUc4TkpMMEFJRuzNzIIVk05UIEzOFVGVc4u>

Memorandum



Date March 6, 2020

To All Agency Presidents
All Agency Human Resources
All Agency Labor Relations

From Paul Fama, Chief People Officer



Re COVID-19 – Leave and Exposure Protocol

The developing situation with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is set forth in various federal, state and City guidance, available at the following links:

- Center for Disease Control (CDC) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>);
- New York State Department of Health (<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus>)
- NYC Health Department (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/health-topics/novel-respiratory-viruses.page>).

The CDC has currently issued travel warnings of Level 2 and 3 for certain countries, which are listed at the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html> In general, Level 3 countries are those where there is “Widespread sustained (ongoing) transmission” and Level 2 countries are those that have “Sustained (ongoing) community transmission.”

This document sets forth the current MTA leave policy with respect to MTA employees who are (i) isolated or quarantined after travel to Level 2 and 3 countries, (ii) directed to quarantine by federal, state or local authorities, or (iii) otherwise determined to be at risk and are isolating or self-monitoring. In addition, this document sets forth leave policies for employees diagnosed with COVID-19.

As this is a rapidly evolving situation, MTA may need to develop different protocols on short notice or act at the direction of federal, state and local health authorities. **While this communication provides a general approach, all employees and situations should be considered on a case by case basis.**

Please be advised that information that an employee or their family members has the coronavirus or is being tested must be held confidential. State and federal law prohibits the disclosure of confidential medical information unless a supervisor is required to implement work restrictions for public health and safety reasons.

A. Guidance on Applicable Leave Policies for Employees under Quarantine and At Risk

The following guidance expands on current MTA HQ and New York City Transit expands existing quarantine policies. Prior to providing this quarantine compensation to represented employees the Labor Relations should have the appropriate conversations with our Labor partners.

1. Travelers from Level 2 and 3 Countries:

Employees returning from CDC Level 2 and 3 countries (including layovers) should contact their Human Resources department **before** reporting to work.

Even if they are not directed to quarantine by officials, employees traveling from Level 2 and 3 countries should remain out of work for 14 calendar days after departure from the Level 2 or 3 country. Human Resources should obtain documentation of travel (scans of passport stamps). They should be allowed to telecommute, with the approval of their supervisor and if their regular duties so allow, and evaluated on a case by case basis

If telecommuting is not available, employees may be entitled to administrative leave for 14 calendar days without using leave balances.

2. Employees Directed to Quarantine by Federal, State and Local Authorities

Employees who are directed to quarantine by federal, state and local authorities will be allowed administrative leave time with pay for the duration of the quarantine period without having to use leave balances. They should be allowed to telecommute, with the approval of their supervisor and if their regular duties so allow, and evaluated on a case by case basis. Human Resources should require proof of direction to quarantine.

3. Other At Risk Employees

Other at risk employees may be designated upon concurrence of Occupational Health Services, Safety and Human Resources. These include, but are not limited to, the following situations:

- Employees who share a residence or have other close contact with a person who has been (a) diagnosed with COVID-19 or (b) exposed to COVID-19 and directed to quarantine by federal, state or local authorities, regardless of whether the person is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

Employees will be required to provide a written statement setting forth the basis for quarantine. Any misrepresentations on the statement will subject an employee to discipline, up to and including termination. Any employee so designated shall remain out of work for 14 calendar days for the duration of the quarantine period. They should be allowed to telecommute, with the approval of their supervisor and if their regular duties so allow, and evaluated on a case by case basis. As a general rule, these employees should be allowed administrative leave with pay during quarantine periods without having to use leave balances.

B. Leave for Employees who have been diagnosed with COVID-19

Employees who have been diagnosed as infected by COVID-19 who are already on an administrative leave for travel, quarantine or other risk factors when they are diagnosed with COVID-19 will be able to use up to 14 days of administrative leave total without using leave balances. Thereafter, employees will use sick time for absences due to COVID-19 illness.

Employees who are diagnosed with COVID-19 in the absence of prior quarantine are entitled to administrative pay without using leave balances during the period of their illness for a period of time not to exceed 14 calendar days and will thereafter be required to use their sick time.

If an employee has exhausted their leave balances, the MTA agencies can either advance or grant additional sick leave on a case by case basis.

Employees who are diagnosed with COVID-19 cannot return to work unless they have been cleared by their personal physician and by Occupational Health Services.