No. 063/20

6th February 2020

Dear Colleague,

Coronavirus Outbreak - Update and Advice from Royal Mail Group, World Health Organisation (WHO) and Public Health England (PHE) for Postal Workers

This LTB is being issued and should be read in conjunction with LTBS 033/20, 043/20 and 054/20.

Please find attached a copy of the latest information issued by the Royal Mail Group Safety Health and Environment Team on the RMG 'intranet' yesterday in relation to the ongoing Coronavirus outbreak.

The Health, Safety & Environment Department continues monitor the situation and continues to be in daily contact with the Royal Mail Group Head of Health and the Safety, Health & Environment team regarding the Coronavirus Outbreak and the advice issued by international health organisations and experts including primarily the WHO, PHE, NHS, DHSC and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

RMG are keeping the situation under review and have issued a fourth communication yesterday (copy attached). RMG continues to promote the ‘good hand hygiene’ message with soap and water. Additionally, ‘Disposable Gloves’ as a barrier are being made available to anyone on request through their line manager which they recommended as an additional precaution. They are ensuring managers know how to order gloves for employees and RMG HQ continue to monitor developments.

The Health, Safety & Environment Department has requested the provision of Hand Sanitizer Gel to the workforce.

In the meantime Royal Mail Group continue to reiterate the message from the UK’s Chief Medical Officer, PHE and NHS that ‘Hand hygiene’ is the first and most important line of defence.

"Can you catch Coronavirus from Parcels and Packages Posted from China to the UK?"

Since the Coronavirus Outbreak in China, the most frequently asked questions from CWU Members and Reps as well as Customers is:

"IS IT SAFE TO HANDLE OR RECEIVE A PACKAGE FROM CHINA OR ANY OTHER PLACE WHERE THERE IS AN IDENTIFIED CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK?"

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said: "Yes, it is safe. People receiving packages are not at risk of contracting the new Coronavirus. From experience with other coronaviruses, the WHO knows that these types of viruses don’t survive long on objects, such as letters or packages."
Additionally at present the information from Public Health England (PHE), with whom Royal Mail Group are working closely with, is that 'the risk of Coronavirus transmitting to people from the surfaces of things such as parcels and packages is low.'

Good work practices, including good hand hygiene, washing regularly with soap and water and the use of gloves, where required is the best defence against the risk of virus infections.

Disposable gloves are available to Royal Mail employee on request through their line manager and the gloves are a recommended additional health precaution.

**Travel Advice**

The Foreign Office is currently advising against all but essential travel to mainland China. Major airlines have suspended all flights to and from the outbreak area in China.

With cases being diagnosed in a growing number of other Countries, the latest foreign travel advice should be checked at [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and should be carefully considered before any international travel at this time.

In the interests of employee health Royal Mail Group are strongly recommending to all employees that they do not travel to or visit China.

Anyone who has recently returned from China and developed a fever, cough or difficulty breathing within the first 14 days should self-isolate and stay at home, call their GP or NHS 111 and report their recent travel.

Royal Mail Group in consultation with the CWU Health, Safety and Environment Department will continue to monitor the situation closely and will act on Public Health England advice which is updated daily. There will be further updates if the advice changes.

**Remember - Maintain Good Basic Hygiene**

The NHS and Doctors advise everyone to maintain good basic hand and personal hygiene standards, washing hands regularly to minimise the risk of any infection as this virus outbreak develops. Use sanitizer gel, use gloves when working as an added barrier precaution.

Any enquiries regarding this Letter to Branches should be addressed to the Health, Safety & Environment Department on telephone number 020 8971 7365.

Yours sincerely,

Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer