

No. 532/2020

11 November 2020

Our Ref: E1/20

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

Royal Mail Introduction of Mandatory Face Mask Wearing in Indoor Work Situations:

In light of the recent worsening Covid-19 circumstances, Royal Mail and the Union have agreed this new measure and are urging full compliance by members, with the crucially important caveat that this must not replace other preventative, risk control measures.

In contrast to the first lockdown, the wearing of face masks is now commonplace in any under-the-roof area where people are together – be it on public transport or in shops.

So clearly we would support this as part of a holistic approach to the safety of our members to stop the spread of the virus and to save lives, and that people who are able to do so, wear masks in the workplace.

Therefore, the disciplines that were in place during the first lockdown should be rigorously enforced once again, along with the wearing of face masks for those able to do so i.e., high levels of hygiene, hand washing regularly, use of sanitiser and disinfectant wipes, two-metre social distancing, all PPE in place and high levels of cleanliness for all equipment and buildings.

The CWU supports all of these key, important safety measures being applied so long as they are applied with equal status, and local reps and members should be fully involved, keeping check and demanding that all of these safety measures are in place.

The CWU is supporting this decision, subject to ongoing discussions, for a number of very important reasons – as we have all seen and heard on the news of the nationwide rise in infections, deaths and hospitalisations and the return to lockdown in England, following on from many areas of the country imposing increased restrictions including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

As well as the general situation, the incidents of workplace infections have, according to the TUC, risen by an alarming 125 per cent over the recent period and, with the imminent 'Christmas Pressure' period and the arrival of an estimated 30,000-plus seasonal casual workers soon to start in Royal Mail, this new measure is of extreme importance.

As well as insisting that the 'mandatory masks' measure is not an end in itself and does not replace other existing preventative, risk control measures, the union is also pressing for the

urgent introduction of a workplace weekly testing regime which is currently under discussion with Royal Mail and government agencies. CWU/HQ has formally put this forward to Royal Mail Group in order to further improve safety, and reduce workplace transmissions and infections – as well as giving a huge reassurance to the workforce at this tough time.

It has been agreed that masks will not be compulsory while working outside – or when seated to eat or drink in rest rooms during breaks – that visors will be provided, that masks will be changed frequently and not limited, and that medical and other specified exemptions will be applied where appropriate.

There will also be appropriate arrangements for those who rely on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions.

A video message on this subject featuring Dave Joyce CWU National Health and Safety Officer and Shaun Davis, Royal Mail compliance & sustainability officer can be viewed at this link on CWU Website: <https://www.cwu.org/news/royal-mail-workers-wearing-masks-keeping-safe-keeping-healthy/>

Further updates will follow.

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer