

No. 166/2020

31 March 2020

Our Ref: E1/20

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

Distribution of Coronavirus COVID 19 Testing Kits - SAC1 Health and Safety - Ongoing RM/CWU National Review

As detailed in LTB 161/20 the government has announced that Royal Mail will have a role in the distribution of Coronavirus testing kits to NHS and Social Care frontline staff currently in isolation and will be exclusively responsible for the collection of these kits.

Whilst the CWU welcomes the government's decision to entrust this crucial task to the Royal Mail network, the priority of the CWU H&S Department is the health, safety and wellbeing of our members, the workforce. Appropriate consultation and discussions have been taking place at a senior level with the business.

In consultation with Government medical advisors and with the involvement of Dave Joyce, CWU Health, Safety & Environment Officer, the risk of carrying the NHS COVID – 19 testing kits has been assessed and controls put in place to ensure that handling them is safe. The packaging meets the United Nations standard for this type of specimen and so will not leak. As an additional precaution, in case the outside of the packaging has been contaminated, employees are instructed to cover them with a plastic bag, without touching them, the first time they are handled. All the safety controls identified have been included in the design of the processes and are described in the Operational Handouts that have been produced and communicated to managers and employees.

The attached documentation provides more details on the process and safety arrangements drawn up with input from the RMG Central SHE Team and RMG Occupational Health and Ergonomics Manager

Throughout the operational process colleagues are reminded to observe strict handwashing guidelines before and after handling mail. Royal Mail has confirmed that hand sanitiser is now available to all collections and delivery staff. Gloves are available, and as an additional safety precaution we recommend gloves are worn by collection drivers

There will be ongoing RM/CWU review at national level, including a weekly conference to ensure oversight. To this end, the CWU H&S Department requests Branch ASRs monitor arrangements in their Branch areas and localities, feeding back queries and questions to the CWU H&S Department. These queries and questions will be logged with the RMG Dangerous Goods Advisor, Governance and Compliance and will be discussed as part of the ongoing national review.

Yours sincerely

Ray Ellis
Acting Health & Safety Officer

CWU 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX
email: info@cwu.org Tel: 020 8971 7200 Fax: 020 8971 7300
General Secretary: Dave Ward

 [@DaveWardGS](https://twitter.com/DaveWardGS)  [Dave Ward CWU](https://www.facebook.com/DaveWardCWU)