

No. 434/2020

28 August 2020

Our Ref: E4/20

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

Royal Mail Group - Provision of Water Bottles – Staying Hydrated Campaign - Communications Posters:

Representations to Royal Mail were again made during the recent heatwave on the very important issue of the provision of water bottles to the outdoor workforce and on communicating the extremely important issue of staying hydrated at all times whilst undertaking manual work. Royal Mail have now agreed to provide water bottles to CWU members.

An 'interim' supply of refillable water bottles are now available for offices to order. There is a limited stock of 65,000 of the 'interim' water bottles and Royal Mail will be prioritising the outdoor workforce.

Beyond that a permanent long term solution is being progressed with a move to the provision of a 'durable, Royal Mail branded, refillable water bottle'. Various manufacturer options are currently being assessed and considered for final selection and approval.

Our Royal Mail members provide the best postal service in the world and after the government declared that postal workers were 'essential workers' at the beginning of the Coronavirus outbreak, postmen and women have worked tirelessly through the six-months of the pandemic without the luxury of being furloughed.

Staff shortages, one-person per van, a 50% increase in parcels, lapsing and the recent record breaking heatwave have obviously piled the pressure on postmen and women, made worse by the fact that water fountains had been shut off due to the risk of virus transmission. All in all, working conditions have been tough – but tough on the outdoor workforce in particular.

Royal Mail, having at long last agreed to our request for the provision of water bottles for the outdoor workforce, have also agreed to jointly campaign on the importance of staying hydrated at all times, developments which are welcomed. This is an important health and safety issue when carrying out a manual job, walking many miles outdoors – especially when in excessively hot, sunny weather conditions, when temperatures are high as they were recently.

We will be continuing to look to ensure that in future Severe Weather Risk Assessments are carried out in hot, heatwave weather to avoid sunburn, dehydration, heat exhaustion and sun stroke and so protect the outdoor delivery workforce.

The problem of adequate water provision for members recently has been made worse by the fact that water fountains had been shut off due to the risk of virus transmission, therefore Royal Mail have issued internal communications to all Office Managers/PICs, informing them of the new provision of water bottles, consisting of:-

- An 'Opps Update' entitled 'Staying Hydrated'
- A Safety Health and Environment (SHE) staff briefing/huddle document and
- A joint poster to be displayed on 'Refilling Water Bottles Safely and Sanitising the Water Dispenser'

All managers have been requested to:-

- Brief all staff on staying hydrated
- Display the poster
- Ensure a good supply of sanitising wipes are provided at the water dispensers
- Ensure water dispensers are used but water fountains remain out of use (see attachments)

Attachments:-

- RM Opps Update 'Staying Hydrated'
- SHE Huddle F20 005 'Staying Hydrated'
- Water Refill Poster
- Sun Safety and Avoid Dehydration Poster.

The Importance and Health Benefits of Good Hydration

Good Hydration means getting the right amount of water before, during, and after work. Water regulates your body temperature and lubricates your joints and helps muscles and joints work better. It promotes better cardiovascular health and helps transport nutrients to give you energy and keep you healthy. If you're not hydrated, your body can't perform at its highest level. Water keeps organs functioning properly. Being well-hydrated also improves sleep quality, cognition, and mood.

Dehydration Dangers

Dehydration can cause heat exhaustion, heat cramps, heatstroke and can reduce the amount of blood in the body, which can put strain on the heart and cause shock - a dangerous decrease in blood pressure, which can have serious health consequences.

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer