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To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

Coronavirus – ‘Covid-19 Test Kits’ and ‘Antibody Test Kits’ - Mailings, Collections, Processing and Delivery – Updated/New Royal Mail Operations Risk Assessments (SAC1) & SSOWs:

This update Letter to Branches is being issued further to LTB 379/20 dated 16 July 2020 which should be read in conjunction with this.

Royal Mail Group and the CWU are proud to be playing a key role in the delivery and return of Covid-19 test kits which is an integral part of the Government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a vital part of the national effort to combat the Coronavirus and CWU members are doing a great job in collecting, processing and delivering the test kits safely to the laboratories.

In April 2020 the Government selected Royal Mail Group and its unparalleled nationwide network to lead as the prime supplier on a number of products. To date Royal Mail and the CWU have worked together to adapt to the changing demands from Government as the pandemic unfolds. In a very short period Royal Mail Group and the CWU have established a network comprised of:

- **Regional/Local Test Centres:** Royal Mail Relay are collecting test kits from circa. 115 test sites up to 4 times daily.
- **Home Collection Service:** The Royal Mail core network has 394 delivery offices undertaking doorstep collections seven days a week.
- **30,000 plus Priority Postboxes:** Have been labelled with collection times after 4pm.
- **Nursing/Care Homes/Schools/GP Surgeries:** Royal Mail are delivering circa. 2,700 boxes of test kits to important parts of our communities.

Both parties continue to work together to ensure that standard operating procedures are in place. In addition, Royal Mail and the CWU continue to work with the Chief Medical Officer to ensure that the operational processes put in place are effective and safe for all members and are supported by the necessary health & safety documentation and Safe Systems of Work (SSOW).

To meet the demand for Coronavirus infection testing into the autumn and winter the Government has asked Royal Mail Group to prepare for the expected significant increase in the

number of test kits returned via Priority Post Boxes along with the newly introduced Coronavirus Antibody Test Kits. These Antibody tests are used to detect antibodies to the COVID-19 virus to see if it's likely that those tested have had the virus before. The test works by testing for the presence of antibodies to see if the person tested has had the virus and has developed an immune response to the virus. Antibody tests differ to Coronavirus 'Swab Tests' which test to see if the person being tested currently has the virus. An antibody test doesn't test if the person tested currently has the virus. There is no definitive evidence as yet with regards to whether those who have had the virus develop long-lasting immunity that would prevent them from getting the virus again. However, the tests answer the question of whether someone has had the virus before and importantly provides data for research and a greater understanding on the spread of the virus.

A joint Royal Mail/CWU review has been undertaken of the Coronavirus/Covid-19 Test Kits Risk Assessment and Safe System of Work (SSoW). From this amendments and improvements have been made to the safe working process in readiness for increasing numbers of test kits coming through the system as the Government 'ramps-up' the testing programme and additionally rolls out the Antibody Testing Programme alongside it. The amended collection and segregation SSoW process has been designed to deal with clearing large quantities of test kits from 'Designated Post Boxes' in a simpler, safer way.

As detailed in LTB 379/20, as the Coronavirus/Covid-19 test kit collection operation moves on and test kit numbers increase, the issue of maintaining compliance with the agreed high safety standards becomes crucial.

This matter has been raised by the CWU Health, Safety and Environment department and been subject to discussions at both the weekly RM/CWU National Joint Operations Skype meetings and on the RM/CWU National Joint Strategic Covid-19 Testing Kits Skype meetings.

It continues to be the agreed approach by Royal Mail HQ and CWU/HQ that we need to work collectively to improve safety compliance. Area Health and Safety Reps (ASRs) and Workplace Health and Safety Reps (WSRs) are asked (by both Royal Mail and CWU) to keep a close eye on this and carry out regular safety spot-checks, reporting any non-compliance to operational management and SHE Advisors/Business Partners.

Pre-Collection List Poster

Royal Mail and CWU/HQ have agreed that we must jointly ensure that all collection drivers, including collections on delivery, have the list of items necessary with them at all times when collecting from any post-box – **see attached 'Pre-Collection List' Poster.**

The 'Collect – Before You Leave The Office' Poster – lists the 8 items required before leaving the Unit – these are:

- Self-Seal Polythene Bags
- Green Mail Sacks
- PDA and Spare Battery
- Hand Sanitiser
- Gloves
- Waste Bag
- Suitable Face Covering Where Required
- Van Wipes (for touch points in the vehicle)

This poster has been issued to all offices via a 'SharePoint' link, and was supported by WTL briefing material. The local 'Deployment Leads' were tasked to follow up with each collection and delivery office to provide concurrence to the following question **"Have the Pre-Collection**

List Posters been printed and displayed in my site?'. Unit Managers have to confirm that this is the case.

ASRs and WSRs are requested to ensure the poster is on display and brought to the attention of collections staff.

Collections staff should then follow the 3 key principles:

1. SPOT IT: UN3373 packaging and T24 label
2. BAG IT: SSOW must be followed (bag all kits)
3. MOVE IT: Keep items separate from other streams and hand it over to a designated contact

DOM Safety Concurrence Check List

Each DOM is asked to complete and sign-off the below concurrence check-list questions to ensure they understand what is required to deliver on the Standard Operating Procedure and Safe Systems Of Work. You will see the question related to 'Pre Collection list posters have been printed and displayed in my site' listed which aligns to the safety standard Royal Mail has set out.

Would ASRs and WSRs spot-check compliance with this requirement:

- **I know who my ops project lead is and have their contact information.**
- **My site has a supply of CV19 labels and York cards (Contact Addressograph duty at Plant for stock).**
- **My site has a supply of green bags to relay the test kits to the plant (1-2 required daily and are sourced from Plant).**
- **My site has a supply of polythene bags and I know how to order further stock.**
- **All collection drivers know to scan test kits as 'Accepted at CSP' before dispatch to Mail Centre.**
- **All collections drivers in my site have been trained and understand what they need to do (SSOW etc.).**
- **All collections drivers in my postcode sectors have a copy of the handout – Test Kit Handout: Collection and Delivery Colleagues.**
- **Pre Collection list posters have been printed and displayed in my site.**
- **All collection drivers know that green bags must be used for test kits once they have been identified.**
- **All collection drivers know that green bags must be kept separate from other mail streams.**
- **All collection drivers have been briefed on the handover process at the Mail Centre.**
- **All my collection roles in my area are aware of the location of their Priority Boxes.**
- **I am aware that all items will be collected Mon – Sat in accordance to current plate times.**
- **I know that my Priority Boxes will be labelled.**
- **I have resource in place to ensure collection from Priority Boxes is in place Mon – Sat.**

- **All of my collectors know that all Priority Boxes will still receive a Collected scan as usual.**

The collection from designated post-boxes SSoW is for each Covid-19 test kit to be over-bagged in a secondary polythene bag to minimise risk of contamination. This is done by turning the bag inside out and pulling it over the test kit without contacting it with the hands. Gloves, which are supplied to collection staff, can be worn for this but they are not required. Sanitiser gel, disinfectant wipes and waste bags are also supplied to all collection staff performing this role and it's important to ensure they do not leave the office without the full range of collection and protective kit and equipment.

Collecting Coronavirus COVID-19 Sample Test Kits from a Post Box – Revised Process

- Collection staff will open the post box as per normal process and scan the barcode.
- Firstly, they'll look to identify any COVID-19 sample kits in the box from either the purple address label or purple Covid 19 test kit label and the UN3373 mark on the back.
- When emptying post boxes they'll visually check for any leaking packages and if any are found they'll follow the specific instructions in the SSoW.
- Each test kit is to be bagged in a secondary polythene bag to minimise any risk of contamination. This is done by turning the polythene bag inside out and pulling it over the test kit without contacting it with the hands. The SSoW has illustrations on this. If staff find it easier they can wear gloves for this, but they are not essential or required.
- The test kits are then placed in a T24 tray or in a mail bag and labelled 'kits'. The tray/bag is then placed in the van so that they can be segregated and bagged easily when they reach the collection hub or mail centre/plant.
- If the post box is in a busy area for pedestrians or traffic or poorly lit and it would be safer etc., the collection staff, wearing gloves, can separate the test kits into a T24 tray, then take the tray to the van and over-bag them at the van.
- In cases where the post box is filled with significant volumes of test kits and where it's not safe or practical, the collections staff can empty the post box into a separate mail bag as per a normal collection from a post box, label and isolate the bag and the test kits can then be segregated, re-bagged and labelled upon return to the collection hub or mail centre/plant, ready for the dedicated, onward despatch to the destination lab.
- The kits must be over-bagged before handing over to the next part of the pipeline and under no circumstances should a kit travel un-bagged to the tracked work area in a mail centre.
- All kits should be bagged at the earliest opportunity.
- Gloves should be disposed of in the rubbish bag and hands washed or cleaned with sanitising gel or disinfectant wipes.

Collecting COVID-19 Sample Kits from Home Collections

- The customer will have taken their swab sample and assembled the packaging and wiped the outside of the outer packaging ready for collection.
- The collections staff member will knock on the door and move back at least 2 metres
- Ask the customer to place the parcel outside the door, check with them that they have cleaned the outer packaging.
- When the door has closed collect the parcel.
- If the outer packaging is not correctly sealed or is damaged the sample should not be collected and the customer/owner advised to order a new test kit.
- The test kit will be over-bagged as described for pillar box collections.
- The item is scanned and placed in a tray or bag.
- Hand over the COVID-19 sample kits separately on arrival at the mail centre.

If at any stage the collections members feel threatened or unsafe or in danger, they can walk away from the doorstep, leaving the test kit parcel. The Police (if required) can then be informed and the Security Helpdesk notified via the manager.

Dealing with Damaged Packages

- If there is minor damage to the outer packaging with no obvious leakage to the COVID-19 kit, it can be over bagged as usual and placed with undamaged kits.
- If a sample container is found after the collection box has been cleared, and there is no leakage, it can be over bagged and placed with other COVID-19 test kits.
- If there is significant damage and a COVID-19 kit is found to be leaking, the process is to close the post box and immediately notify the line manager.

Coronavirus COVID-19 Antibody Tests

After successful trials in June/July, these new finger-prick blood tests were found to be 98.6% accurate. The Government is rolling out the new test this month and are hopeful that the test will be available for use in a mass screening program by the end of the year. The UK Government announced that the finger-prick tests can tell within 20 minutes if a person has ever been exposed to the Coronavirus. The Department of Health and Social Care has stated that the tests will help Government scientists and doctors to better understand how Coronavirus is spreading across the country and to determine whether or not antibodies indicate immunity from reinfection or transmission. Royal Mail is contracted to provide the delivery and returns service for these tests kits as per the Coronavirus COVID-19 infection test kits. The new antibody kits are sent to people who are not showing signs of infection from COVID-19.

Important

Although these test kits involve the collection of blood, the very small volume of blood involved (0.5ml - about a ¼ of a teaspoon) goes into a very small sample, tube, container where it mixes with a chemical clotting agent and quickly solidifies before being posted and therefore reduces and avoids the risk of spillage and contamination.

Collecting COVID-19 Antibody Sample Kits from a Post Box:

- The post box is opened as per normal process and barcode scanned.
- When emptying post boxes the collection member will visually check for any leaking or contaminated packages and if found follow the instructions in the SSoW.
- The Coronavirus COVID-19 antibody sample kits will have the UN3373 mark on the outside of the 'polylope' and should be treated in the same way as other normal biological specimens.
- These antibody test kits do not require over-bagging unless the outer packaging has visible contamination. If there are signs of contamination, (i.e., blood on the outside of the packaging), then each kit is to be over-bagged in a secondary polythene bag to minimise any risk of contamination. This is done by turning the bag inside out and pulling it over the test kit without contacting it with the hands. Gloves can be worn if preferred and if found to be easier but they are not necessary or mandatory.
- Used gloves are disposed of in the provided rubbish bag without touching the outside with bare hands and then the hands are cleaned with sanitising gel or disinfectant wipe which are supplied by Royal Mail.
- The lancets (sharps) being used are retractable, protected and are single use and do not present a risk of stick injuries. In any case they are not to be returned with test kits by the customer.

See Attachments for your attention and assistance:

- Pre-Collection List Poster 'Have You Got What You Need'
- Coronavirus COVID-19 Test Kit Mailings Delivery and Collections (Royal Mail Operations SSOW)
- Coronavirus COVID-19 Test Kit Mailings Delivery and Collections (Royal Mail Operations SAC1/Risk Assessment)
- Delivery, Collection and Processing of Coronavirus COVID-19 Antibody Testing (Royal Mail Operations SSOW)
- Delivery, Collection and Processing of Coronavirus COVID-19 Antibody Testing (Royal Mail Operations SAC1/Risk Assessment)

ASR/WSR Involvement

It is agreed between Royal Mail HQ and CWU/HQ that ASRs and WSRs will be fully involved and consulted in ensuring compliance with the Safe Systems of Work and any additional required local risk assessment arrangements additional to these generic standards. Safety spot checks and inspections to check compliance with the SSoW should take place and are both encouraged and welcomed by Royal Mail HQ.

Any non-compliant offices or management queries can be reported directly to:-

Francis Williams Royal Mail Head of Commercial and Field Programmes.

Email:- francis.williams@royalmail.com

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer