

Royal Mail Group and CWU Joint Statement on the Protection of Employees During the Coronavirus Pandemic Through the Mandating of Face Coverings in Indoor Workplaces (Final)

Introduction

In line with its Health and Safety Policy, Royal Mail Group (RMG) remain committed to ensuring that health and safety remain core business values and to maintaining a healthy and safe working environment with safety the No1 priority. To this end and in consultation with the Communication Workers Union (CWU), RMG has taken the decision to increase the protection of its employees by mandating the wearing of face coverings, a protective item, in indoor workplaces during the coronavirus pandemic.

Since the pandemic began RMG has adhered closely to the advice and guidance of reputable organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), the UK Government and public health authorities, the NHS and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

New confirmed coronavirus cases are on the rise across the UK, along with hospital admissions and deaths and the Department of Health warns that it is highly likely that the spread could significantly increase. RMG and the CWU therefore jointly agree that the mandating of face coverings in indoor workplaces is an essential step in ensuring that workers are kept safe and can comply with government and public health advice.

In line with the spirit and intent of the WHO, the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and UK Government advice, RMG will adopt a supportive approach to its employees on the wearing of face coverings.

Background

Several coronavirus case clusters have occurred within RMG and this has resulted in the involvement of the public health authorities, the HSE and local authorities. Various recommendations have been made by these bodies, including that RMG should introduce the mandatory wearing of face coverings in indoor workplaces.

WHO and UK Government stress that all businesses and employers must play a proactive and preventative role in order to stop the spread of coronavirus. RMG and the CWU are fully committed to these objectives. As one of the UK's biggest employers, RMG will continue to plan ahead and work closely with the CWU, at all levels, who support this approach.

RMG working with the CWU will be doing all it can to support employees, through awareness raising, preventative steps, employee health campaigning and advice and support from the Health and Wellbeing Team and HR Business Partners. The Safety, Health and Environment Team will continue to support managers effectively and RMG will continue to update the 'Q&A' document with CWU input.

This current Coronavirus health threat is being prioritised across all communications channels within the business and RMG is doing all it can in line with public health authority guidelines and advice. Public Health England advice will be followed when it is safe to return to any building that may be closed due the pandemic and when it presents no risk to employees working there.

Positive Cases

Following the diagnosis of positive cases in the workplace intense viricidal cleaning will take place in both the workplace and vehicles. Rapid outbreak response service professionals will be utilised to provide deep cleaning, infection control and antimicrobial disinfection where necessary. CWU Representatives will be fully involved at all times with their input taken into account.

Measures to Reduce the Risk of Coronavirus Transmission in the Workplace

RMG and the CWU recognise that the introduction of the mandatory use of face coverings in indoor settings is part of a package of Government control measures to reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission and must not be treated in isolation as a 'catch-all' solution. RMG fully recognises the need to:

- Maintain social distancing of 2m.
- Promote increased hygiene standards including increasing the frequency of hand washing/hand sanitising and the use of disinfectant wipes.
- Maintain increased cleaning standards in workplaces, toilets, washrooms, changing rooms, restrooms etc, and vehicles plus surface cleaning, including disinfecting frequent touch points.
- REMEMBERING – "HANDS – FACE – SPACE".

Other required measures include: keeping the activity time involved as short as possible; using screens or barriers to separate people from each other; using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible; and reducing the number of people each person has contact with, in line with government and HSE guidance. Face coverings alone are no substitute for all of the above measures.

Visors can be worn and will be provided on request (to be worn in conjunction with a face covering).

Face coverings are not compulsory whilst working outside.

Covid-Secure Compliance

Managers are required to implement the controls stipulated in the unit-level coronavirus risk assessment at their unit and confirm compliance by submitting the risk assessment return. SHE Business Partners and CWU ASRs will be fully involved, consulted and available to advise and support unit managers with any queries about the controls or their compliance to them.

Information, Instruction and Training

Employees will be informed of this new standard and instructed on how to use and wear a face covering properly and what face coverings they are permitted to wear in the workplace. Joint RMG/CWU Work Time Listening and Learning briefings will be conducted in communicating the change.

This is a link to the RMTV video featuring Dr Shaun Davis and Dave Joyce: [RMTV Video](#)

Supplies

It is recognised that it is imperative that sufficient supplies of the correct face coverings are available to the workforce. Every employee using a face mask needs to be fully aware of why it is needed, when it is to be used and when it is to be replaced.

Joint Working - Monitoring and Reviewing Compliance

RMG will encourage everyone to support this policy. Strong local CWU involvement and employee engagement at this stage will mean better understanding of the standard and the reasons for the 'Covid-Secure' risk control measure being introduced. Managers and CWU representatives will work together to ensure that this policy is deployed in a supportive manner, providing encouragement, assistance and help – not a punitive approach.

Mental Health

RMG also fully recognises the vital importance of protecting the health, safety and welfare of employees and that workplace stress is a health and safety issue. RMG acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors, especially the during the pandemic. Drawing on our experience in the development of the RMG Five-Year Mental Health Strategy, RMG continues with the full support and involvement of the CWU, to support and assist those in distress with mental health problems. Mental wellbeing will continue to be promoted to minimise the risk of widespread and long-term problems as a result of the pandemic.

Non-Compliance and Exemptions

Non-compliance will be dealt with in a supportive manner using existing jointly agreed policies e.g. the "three-step PPE process". It is recognised that there are many physical health and mental health, illnesses, impairments or disability reasons why an employee may be unable to wear a face covering. Where this is the case, they should inform their manager that they are unable to wear a face covering and share evidence of their exemption which does not have to include the specific health condition. RMG commits to dealing with this situation in a sensitive, supportive and confidential way. Managers will work closely with CWU Reps to ensure these employees are supported and given any assistance required.

Staff may remove face coverings when seated to eat or drink in staff mess rooms, rest rooms, restaurants or cafes but must put their face covering back on once finished eating or drinking.

Roll Out and Review

There is a joint commitment between RMG and the CWU that this policy and Joint Statement will remain under regular joint review by the signatories.



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