

No. 063/20

6th February 2020

Dear Colleague,

Coronavirus Outbreak - Update and Advice from Royal Mail Group, World Health Organisation (WHO) and Public Health England (PHE) for Postal Workers

This LTB is being issued and should be read in conjunction with LTBS 033/20, 043/20 and 054/20.

Please find attached a copy of the latest information issued by the Royal Mail Group Safety Health and Environment Team on the RMG 'intranet' yesterday in relation to the ongoing Coronavirus outbreak.

The Health, Safety & Environment Department continues monitor the situation and continues to be in daily contact with the Royal Mail Group Head of Health and the Safety, Health & Environment team regarding the Coronavirus Outbreak and the advice issued by international health organisations and experts including primarily the WHO, PHE, NHS, DHSC and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

RMG are keeping the situation under review and have issued a fourth communication yesterday (copy attached). RMG continues to promote the 'good hand hygiene' message with soap and water. Additionally, 'Disposable Gloves' as a barrier are being made available to anyone on request through their line manager which they recommended as an additional precaution. They are ensuring managers know how to order gloves for employees and RMG HQ continue to monitor developments.

The Health, Safety & Environment Department has requested the provision of Hand Sanitizer Gel to the workforce.

In the meantime Royal Mail Group continue to reiterate the message from the UK's Chief Medical Officer, PHE and NHS that 'Hand hygiene' is the first and most important line of defence.

"Can you catch Coronavirus from Parcels and Packages Posted from China to the UK?"

Since the Coronavirus Outbreak in China, the most frequently asked questions from CWU Members and Reps as well as Customers is:

"IS IT SAFE TO HANDLE OR RECEIVE A PACKAGE FROM CHINA OR ANY OTHER PLACE WHERE THERE IS AN IDENTIFIED CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK?"

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said: "Yes, it is safe. People receiving packages are not at risk of contracting the new Coronavirus. From experience with other coronaviruses, the WHO knows that these types of viruses don't survive long on objects, such as letters or packages."

Additionally at present the information from Public Health England(PHE), with whom Royal Mail Group are working closely with, is that 'the risk of Coronavirus transmitting to people from the surfaces of things such as parcels and packages is low.'

Good work practices, including good hand hygiene, washing regularly with soap and water and the use of gloves, where required is the best defence against the risk of virus infections.

Disposable gloves are available to Royal Mail employee on request through their line manager and the gloves are a recommended additional health precaution.

Travel Advice

The Foreign Office is currently advising against all but essential travel to mainland China. Major airlines have suspended all flights to and from the outbreak area in China.

With cases being diagnosed in a growing number of other Countries, the latest foreign travel advice should be checked at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice and should be carefully considered before any international travel at this time.

In the interests of employee health Royal Mail Group are strongly recommending to all employees that they do not travel to or visit China.

Anyone who has recently returned from China and developed a fever, cough or difficulty breathing within the first 14 days should self-isolate and stay at home, call their GP or NHS 111 and report their recent travel.

Royal Mail Group in consultation with the CWU Health, Safety and Environment Department will continue to monitor the situation closely and will act on Public Health England advice which is updated daily. There will be further updates if the advice changes.

Remember - Maintain Good Basic Hygiene

The NHS and Doctors advise everyone to maintain good basic hand and personal hygiene standards, washing hands regularly to minimise the risk of any infection as this virus outbreak develops. Use sanitizer gel, use gloves when working as an added barrier precaution.

Any enquiries regarding this Letter to Branches should be addressed to the Health, Safety & Environment Department on telephone number 020 8971 7365.

Yours sincerely,



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer

Royal Mail Group

Coronavirus - RMG Health & Wellbeing team are continuing to monitor the situation.

We take the wellbeing of our employees extremely seriously. We are following the situation with the coronavirus closely to keep our guidance for our people up to date and reduce any potential impact on individuals, our customers and our communities. We are monitoring information published by the Chinese authorities, World Health Organisation, Public Health England and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. If there are any changes or updates to how this guidance effects our policy and procedures we will issue updates through the intranet and directly to the SHE team.

As with all mail handling and all other roles, good hand and personal hygiene should be maintained to minimise the risk of any infection of colds and flu, which are very common at this time of year. Hands should always be washed before eating and any gloves worn for mail handling should be washed frequently.

One of the questions frequently asked is:

IS IT SAFE TO RECEIVE A PACKAGE FROM CHINA OR ANY OTHER PLACE WHERE THE VIRUS HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED?

The World Health Organisation has said:

Yes, it is safe. People receiving packages are not at risk of contracting the new coronavirus. From experience with other coronaviruses, we know that these types of viruses don't survive long on objects, such as letters or packages.

At present the information from Public Health England, who we are working closely with, informs us the risk that the virus can transmit outside the human host and from surfaces is low. The usual work practices including the use of gloves where required and good hand hygiene are required. Disposable gloves can be made available to anyone on request through their line manager and are a recommended additional precaution.

Travel advice

The Foreign Office is currently advising against all but essential travel to mainland China. Some airlines have also cancelled all flights to and from the country.

Capita, Royal Mail Group's travel partner, have also updated their portal with the latest travel advice. If you are planning to travel to China on Royal Mail business, you must cancel this and not travel at this time.

With cases being diagnosed in other countries, the latest foreign travel advice (www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) should be considered before any international travel.

In the interests of employee health we strongly recommend that colleagues on personal visits do not travel to China.

Anyone who has recently returned from China and developed a fever, cough or difficulty breathing within the first 14 days should self-isolate and stay at home, call their GP or NHS 111 and report their recent travel.

Please speak to your line manager if you have any questions or concerns.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely and will act on Public Health England advice which is updated daily. We will provide further updates if the advice changes.

Nicholas Burns - CMIOSH , MIIAI

Safety Health and Environment Engagement Manager

Royal Mail Group Safety, Health and Environment