



On The Move

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Local 234 Wins COVID-19 Safety Demands

Ever since the coronavirus appeared in the region, Local 234 has been fighting for enhanced safety measures to protect the health and well-being of our members and the riding public. As a result, SEPTA has agreed to make the following improvements, many of which are already in effect. If you find that any of these safeguards are being disregarded call your union staff representative immediately.

- SEPTA has suspended the attendance point system to make it easier for sick employees to stay home without incurring disciplinary action. The most common symptoms for COVID-19 are chills; repeated shaking with chills; muscle pain; headache; sore throat; and new loss of taste or smell. If you have these symptoms call your doctor immediately, request testing and hit the sick book.
- The usual documentation and waiting time to receive sick benefits has been waived.
- SEPTA is providing full pay to employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 and to those sent home as a result of having contact with a co-worker who tested positive, over and above the requirements of the recently enacted COVID-19 legislation.
- SEPTA is quarantining employees beyond the guidance issued by the CDC.
- Employees at greater risk to the virus are allowed to take sick leave, even though they are not actually sick.
- Locations with multiple positive tests are being sterilized to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Rider limits have been imposed so that social distancing can be maintained on vehicles in revenue service. Back-up vehicles are being placed in service on heavily traveled routes to reduce overcrowding.
- Operation of the VMIS system in maintenance has been modified to promote social distancing and to avoid the shared use of un-sanitized computer terminals.
- Employee break times, report locations, and interactions with managers have also been modified in maintenance, to increase opportunities for proper social distancing.
- Vehicles, equipment, and facilities' surfaces are being wiped down with disinfectant every two hours.

- All vehicles are equipped with operator protective barriers.
- Rear door boarding has been instituted and passengers are encouraged to wear facial coverings.
- Cashiers are no longer required to handle cash.
- SEPTA has procured personal protective equipment including gloves, 600,000 surgical masks and 10,000 reusable, washable, neck gaiters to enhance the safety of all employees.
- SEPTA has agreed to develop a temperature screening program which will be implemented as soon as the equipment can be obtained. Temperature screening can address the problem of asymptomatic carriers of the virus and protect members from possible exposure by those who have the coronavirus, but otherwise appear to be in good health.
- Due to the reduction in ridership, weekday schedules have been dramatically reduced, allowing operators to work four days on and three days off, at the 40 hour guarantee.
- The Union demanded the same scheduling changes in maintenance, however, SEPTA refused to honor our demand. Instead, employees who worked 40 hours during the past two weeks will receive a paid day off for each week in which they worked 40 hours. Going forward, maintenance employees who work a 40 hour week will receive 4 hours in comp time. It is important to note that while Local 234 was pressing this issue, every other SEPTA union accepted the 4 hours comp time going forward. After Local 234 secured retroactive time off, SEPTA agreed to make the same concession to the other unions.
- We are still working to achieve a more accurate system for identifying positive cases and conducting contact tracing, including training for those assigned as “contact tracers” and continue to quarantine employees with pay who came into contact with a co-worker with a positive test.
- As we see around the country, as more tests for the virus are administered, the number of people that test positive steadily increases. SEPTA is working to develop the capacity to test employees for the virus by gaining access to the saliva test which is a less invasive means for testing.
- While the vast majority of those with the virus recover, members with underlining health problems that might compromise their immune systems, such as kidney problems, heart conditions, diabetes and hypertension are vulnerable to life threatening complications from the virus. If you suffer from an underlying medical condition that could be fatal if you get the virus, call your doctor and take sick leave.

If you have question concerns or suggestions, please address your staff person or call the Union Hall and leave a message at 215-972-4140. Please stay safe and in touch.

We Must and We Will