

## **Latest from PANYNJ on COVID19**

**March 12, 2020**

The Port Authority and PATH are continuing to actively monitor developments regarding Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Moving forward, all updates regarding COVID-19 will be distributed under this banner. Updates will be made regularly.

As was the case at the time of our last update, coronavirus remains a huge concern for the agency, the region, and the country. Our focus remains simple: to work hard and to work smart and to work together. This enables us to stay on top of such a demanding situation, ensuring that we both protect ourselves and carry out our important work on behalf of the millions of people who depend on us.

After sharing with you the latest information on the virus and its broader impact on our region, I'll update you on a set of concrete steps our agency is taking and has been taking to ensure the health and well-being of each member of our workforce.

### **The Latest News on COVID-19**

As you know, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic as the coronavirus continues to spread globally. At the time of this notification, there have been 248 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the bistate region, and 1,269 total cases in the U.S. Both New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy have declared a state of emergency to help to more quickly and effectively contain and mitigate the spread of the virus. We remain in regular contact with state and federal health authorities to ensure we're taking all prudent and necessary measures.

The risk remains low to those living or traveling through the bistate region. But the virus poses very serious challenges, and that's why it is crucial that employees continue to follow agency guidelines regarding preventive practices. These guidelines are based directly on guidance that has been provided to us by the relevant public health experts – the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Departments of Health for New York and New Jersey.

## **Agency Update**

Before getting to the specific steps that we wanted to let you know about, I wanted to first update you as to our Executive Director, Rick Cotton. As you know, Rick tested positive for the coronavirus and given his positive test, he remains at home. He remains entirely asymptomatic (which means he has no coronavirus symptoms) and he has been completely focused on keeping a full schedule and leading the agency. There have been no other confirmed cases of agency employees testing positive for the virus. The New York State Department of Health has concluded that people who were in direct contact with Rick last Friday (and not on any other day last week) should be in self-quarantine. This is a precaution, as the risk of transmission was very low. But some employees are working from home, including some of the agency's senior leaders.

We are 100% committed to keeping you safe and well, and to communicating to you the latest information that is available, based on advice, as noted above, from the federal CDC and from the state health departments. Here are some of the measures we are taking:

### **Continued Aggressive Cleaning Schedules**

The Port Authority has greatly enhanced its cleaning and sanitizing protocols in response to COVID-19. We are doing more frequent cleaning, multiple times each day, including all frequently touched surfaces. And we are using EPA-approved and CDC-endorsed disinfectants that are certified to kill viruses. This cleaning has focused on all of our facilities, on all of our employee common areas, and on all offices where employees work. Special cleaning has been done in the workspaces of each employee who had direct contact last Friday with the Executive Director. We will not let up on the cleaning. We will keep at it, and if guidance from public health experts changes, we will immediately take steps to follow it.

We are also providing cleaning supplies for your use in your own personal workspaces. In fact, more than a few of you have made it a routine, particularly in our maintenance groups, after every shift. Thanks for that extra effort for your colleagues!

### **Personal Protective Equipment for Frontline Staff**

The official health department guidance has been that masks and gloves are not recommended or needed for employees, unless those masks and gloves are already mandated for a particular job. But we want you to feel safe. Any frontline agency staff are free to wear masks and gloves if it makes them feel more comfortable during this time. This is consistent with the approach that has been taken by the MTA and by the federal TSA. As with those agencies, employees choosing to opt for masks and gloves should plan to furnish them on their own.

Additionally, concern has been expressed regarding PATH conductors who, unlike their counterparts at other transit agencies, typically are stationed in the open area of a car – as opposed to an enclosed space. We'll immediately enable them to physically move to a part of the train that has an enclosed cabin.

### **Limiting Group Meeting Size to 20 or Fewer**

In light of concerns that have been expressed by public health experts, effective Monday, March 16, all meetings will be strictly limited in size to 20 or fewer in-person participants. No agency employee should attend a work meeting, whether it is hosted at an agency facility or off-site, that has more than 20 in-person participants. Exceptions may be granted in limited circumstances for emergency preparedness and response.

### **Departmental Champions**

To ensure that we are staying as close as we possibly can to any concerns or issues you may be having, over the next 24 hours, each Department will be designating a "champion" – an employee in your Department who you can approach, and pose questions to, related to our current situation. These questions can range from resources, staffing and policy questions to questions regarding your own health and safety. These Department-by-Department champions will serve as a direct conduit to Human Resources and the Office of Emergency Management. HR and OEM will work to get the issues you bring to the Departmental champions addressed – as quickly and as systematically as is possible. Shortly after this Broadcast, you'll receive a note from your Chief or Director indicating who will be serving as your Department's champion.

### **Department Q&A Forums with Dr. Fisher**

Many of you know our agency's Chief Medical Officer, Doctor Howard Fisher. Dr. Fisher is a seasoned medical professional, who has been providing advice and guidance to agency leaders with respect to the coronavirus. In an effort to provide each of you with the benefit of Dr. Fisher's medical expertise, and to pose any relevant questions about the coronavirus, you'll each be getting an invitation to a conference call conversation with your Department Chief and/or Director, Dr. Fisher, your Department Champion and me. You'll be able to submit questions in advance that may be on your mind, and we will answer them on the conference call, for the benefit of the whole group.

### **Flexible Schedules and Remote Work Arrangements**

Existing policies in the agency allow for flexible schedules and remote work arrangements with the approval of your Chief/Director. We are considering very carefully how we could expand our use of flexible schedules (so that some employees can commute to work when it's not rush hour) or to make further use of remote work arrangements. Stay tuned as we continue to develop our plans.

### **Daily Communications and COVID-19 Portal for the Latest Information**

In addition to the actions outlined above, we will continue to connect directly with you daily, in Broadcasts, to share more about the steps we're taking across our facilities to help keep you, our employees, safe and healthy. Keep an eye open for a new COVID-19 portal on eNet which is being developed to serve as a central information resource.

### **REMINDER: What You Can Do as Preventive Measures:**

One of the most important things employees should know are the symptoms of COVID-19. According to the CDC, reported illnesses have ranged from infected people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying. Symptoms can include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. The CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. The agency's Office of Medical Services, in accordance with guidance from the CDC, advises all employees to continue using the following preventive measures:

Handwashing is the single most important infection control measure. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Avoid shaking hands.

Stay home when you are sick.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your elbow, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

We hope this daily update will provide you with greater real-time information as this situation unfolds. Please reach out to your department champions to get your questions answered!

As always thanks for all you do.

Mary Lee Hannell  
Chief, Human Capital