



May 1, 2020

VIA E-MAIL

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460-1101A

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

As federal employees anticipate being recalled to their buildings and offices, the employees represented by the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have expressed a significant amount of anxiety and fear about their ability to return to work safely. Their fears are understandable, as more than 1 million Americans are infected with COVID-19 (one-third of the global total) and more than 60,000 U.S. residents have died from this virus.

In order to prepare for the potential resumption of agency operations, I request that a briefing be scheduled with NTEU as soon as possible to answer employees' many questions and concerns regarding the continuing threat from the COVID-19 pandemic and what precautions the agency will be taking to ensure their safety in this current environment. While I understand that you have held a preliminary briefing with the various unions at EPA, more discussion is warranted as the agency continues to develop more specific plans to return employees to the workplace. We would also like to discuss recommendations NTEU has developed to ensure a safe return that acknowledges the challenges that returning to the office poses to employees.

At the outset, we would like to emphasize that where state and local leaders have determined that stay-at-home orders remain necessary to protect the safety of citizens and to reduce the transmission of the virus, employees should be allowed to comply with those orders where possible. NTEU requests this briefing so that NTEU and EPA can work together to ensure the safe return of employees to work and prepare for a smooth and successful resumption of on-site operations.

During this briefing, we would like to discuss the following measures to protect employee safety at any locations where on-site operations resume:

- COVID-19 testing for all employees;
- Screening employees, including taking temperatures;

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- Cleaning and disinfecting all workspaces and common;
- Safe physical distancing;
- Ample supplies of hand-sanitizer, wipes, and gloves (for those handling mail);
- Wearing masks/cloth face coverings in the workplace;
- Maximizing telework, particularly for employees with children whose schools or child-care facilities are closed; and,
- Telework or weather and safety leave for “high risk” employees.

EPA employees already face many challenges in the course of their work and concerns about their health and safety while returning to shared office spaces should not be one of them. I know you share that interest.

To arrange this briefing, NTEU’s point of contact is Tim Seidman, National Negotiator, at tim.seidman@nfeu.org. I appreciate your cooperation on this. Please do not hesitate to reach out directly to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Anthony M. Reardon
National President

cc: Krysti Wells, Director, Labor and Employee Relations Division
Ken Moffett, NTEU Director of Negotiations
Frank Barczykowski, NTEU Deputy Director of Negotiations
Tim Seidman, NTEU National Negotiator