

November 16, 2020

Do I Have to Wear A Mask at Work?

A simple question with no one simple answer for everyone

As the second wave of COVID unfolds, CUPW has emerging concerns that we're keeping a close watch on:

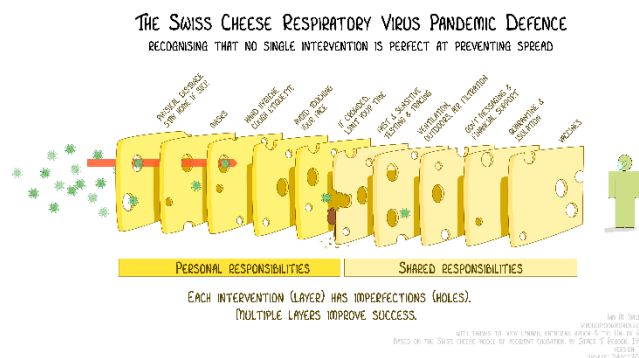
- we're seeing rising numbers of confirmed cases among our membership, and
- we now know of cases of workplace transmission, which is something that we fortunately did not face in wave one. This may bring us new issues to deal with.

The second wave also comes with a colder change of seasons and other new factors. Knowledge on COVID-19 transmission is improving all the time. We cannot be complacent and we will have to be open to health and safety measures that are different from those that got us through the first wave.

For instance, CUPW has been following provincial legislation and regulation with regard to mandatory face coverings in the workplace. We must remain clear: It is Canada Post Corporation's obligation to protect the health and safety of its employees – in consultation with the appropriate bargaining agents – and it is CUPW's place to represent the interests and rights of our members.

That said, we have a responsibility to encourage members to take safety precautions. We urge all workers at Canada Post to be thoughtful and considerate of each other's safety. Research shows that face covering is

one of several measures that reduce transmission. When you see a co-worker practicing good physical distancing or wearing a face covering, please recognize that they are contributing to your safety as much as (maybe more than) their own. It's not a show of fear or anxiety, it's a caring gesture of solidarity and respect for each other. We all want to see an end to the pandemic with as few illnesses and deaths as possible.



We also have to be honest with ourselves: Not everyone can remain always fully alert to physical distancing regulations while under pressure to handle peak season volumes. Good hand hygiene practice is a good goal, but takes extra effort to practice – especially in workplaces. Not everyone can wear a face covering at work, and even a mandatory mask policy – where they exist – must have room for valid exceptions. You need to know that if you have sound reasons not to wear a mask at work, CUPW will be there to protect your rights if there's any resulting retaliation, harassment, or other consequences on you. If you are unable to wear a mask, Canada Post should provide a face shield.

Nonetheless, in the bigger picture, we are pushing Canada Post Corporation at the national level to give clear and consistent policy direction on a number of issues including health and safety and leave provisions, and to provide all the appropriate safety measures so that you can keep yourself, your co-workers, and your customers safe in your workplaces.

We all know by now what's at stake. Our first priority is to look after each other and get through the pandemic safely. Think about your co-workers, especially those with high-risk loved ones, and those with limited options to protect themselves. Think of your co-workers who go home to vulnerable loved ones when they return from work.

Cooperate with your local joint health and safety committee, and report to them when you suspect transmission risks. Work with your local to educate yourself and others on how to prevent COVID transmission. Support your co-workers who are making good choices. Do what you can not only to follow appropriate safety guidelines, but also to show your co-workers that you're looking out for their health. We'll be stronger and healthier when we do all this. Let's pull together and minimize the number of people who get exposed to the virus. It's on all of us.

In Solidarity,



Julee Sanderson
1st National Vice-President

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