

# Union Drivers' Journal

*Organizing Crew Transporters for a Better Life On and Off the Job*

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## Union Update to Rail Crew Hauling Drivers

3/19/2010

### Company Coronavirus Responses:

The Union has asked the three major Rail Crew Hauling Companies (PTI , Hallcon/Renzenberger and RCX) what they are doing to address concerns over the coronavirus pandemic. Later in this email are the questions we have asked the companies and their responses so far. Basically all three companies are putting out CDC information, trying to work with the Railroads on a coordinated response and setting up internal contact points to handle the issue.

**Two Major Driver Concerns:** The two major concerns we are hearing from drivers are:

- Do we have to work if we feel at risk?
- Will we get paid if we can't work because of the virus?

**Rights and Government Actions:** At this moment (and all three companies are right that the situation is very fluid and changing minute by minute) here is the situation as we understand it:

- Federal law provides that a worker does not have to perform work that they believe will endanger their lives.
- Your Union Contract also provides your right to refuse work that will endanger you.
- If you are laid off, Unemployment Compensation may be available to you. It's different in each State.
  - You can and should call your State Unemployment Compensation Department to see if they are granting UC benefits to people out of work because of the virus and under what circumstances.

( concern over contracting the illness, closure of facility, closure of a school or child care facility requiring a parent to stay home, etc..)

- If you contract the disease, and you believe you contracted it at work, you may have a Workers Compensation claim. As with Unemployment, the law varies with each State. Call them and request your rights in this situation.
- **Note: Federal Legislation:** Last night Congress passed, and the President signed a coronavirus “Phase 2” Act that provides limited paid sick time, free testing, and some paid time for parents whose children’s schools have closed. Since all three companies employ over 500 people, most of the paid sick time provisions will not apply. However the expanded money for State unemployment programs may be helpful. A “Phase 3” piece of legislation will be introduced in the Senate today, and we’ll see if it has more support for workers and their families.
- **Note2: State Actions:** *Many states and cities are beefing up unemployment allowances, requiring paid time off by employers or helping out impacted workers either administratively or by enactment. Keep an eye on what’s going on to see if you get coverage from a State or Local action.*
- **Now is the Time for YOU to Call Your House and Senate Reps:** You should call both your House Representative and your Senators and tell them to pass legislation that fully compensates you for any loss of wages you have due to the coronavirus. They need to hear from the grassroots like never before.
- **Now is the Time for YOU to Call Your State Reps:** You should call your State Representatives and ask them what they are doing to assure income assistance and healthcare during the crisis. The States are the administrators of Unemployment Compensation, Medicare and Medicaid, as well as a number of food and other social assistance programs.

**Railroads Actions:** As of this moment, the Union has not been advised of any confirmed virus cases among Railroaders or drivers. At this point we suggest you:

- Follow the advice on the CDC Flyers. It is the most credible information available
- Please continue to report what is going on at your locations to both management and your Stewards and Area Representatives.
- Report immediately if you suspect you have contracted Coronavirus

- If you have a personal concern, please talk to us.
  - The CDC (Center for Disease Control) has a ton of information on its website at: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html?link\\_id=0&can\\_id=545ca71e74935104a106b2f7201fad58&source=email-staying-safe-out-there&email\\_referrer=email\\_753170\\_subject\\_1008058&email\\_subject=coronavirus-support-and-safety](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html?link_id=0&can_id=545ca71e74935104a106b2f7201fad58&source=email-staying-safe-out-there&email_referrer=email_753170_subject_1008058&email_subject=coronavirus-support-and-safety)
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## Union's Questions to all three Companies

*We now have a couple of reports that RR's have been found coronavirus positive (not Hallcon sites as far as we know). Don't know if these are rumors or fact, but it hardly matters in the current environment.*

- *What policies have you put forward for drivers if they or a co-worker is positive or suspected to be positive?*
- *What policies have the RR's put forward for when a RR or PTI employee has a positive, suspected or confirmed?*
- *What policies surround drivers who either do not feel safe working, or want to work where a positive or suspected positive has been found?*
- *What pay practices are being formulated, if any, for drivers who lose work as a result of virus-related closures or safety measures?*
- *Will you support or block Unemployment Compensation claims related to the inability to work due to the virus?*
- *What communication system, if any, have you developed to advise the union and drivers about virus related issues, policies, or requirements? Is there a designated key person to contact and who is the center of any virus-related issues that arise?*

A speedy response would be appreciated.

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## PTI Responses

- Six flyers from the CDC advising on steps to avoid infection and to stay at home if you're sick. Also advice on what to do if you think you've got the virus.
- Good afternoon! I want to provide an update on the ever changing landscape as it pertains to COVID-19. We are taking multiple steps to ensure our drivers and customers are safe and protected. As you know we published a plan last week to monitor information from the CDC and use their recommendations to keep our entire team informed. The plan continues to evolve as warranted based on facts and data released from

the CDC and World Health Organization. Here are a few steps we've put in place recently.

- Implemented frequent cleaning/disinfecting of touch points in our vehicles. Drivers have been instructed to wipe down touch points and other areas inside our vehicles as often as practical. At minimum they will clean/disinfect touch points as part of their pre-trip inspection and more often if a passenger shows signs of illness. For DYVs they will clean/disinfect at least twice per shift. They will also leave doors and windows open between trips where the climate and location permit.
- Cancelled group gatherings of more than 5 people in field operations. This includes driver meetings and larger group training sessions. We will move more toward electronic communication in order to keep our drivers safe and distributed.
- Limited air travel of our field leadership team. Driving versus flying and working from home is encouraged if possible.
- Implemented a no handshake policy for all employees. We will use alternate methods to greet our customers and fellow employees.
- Contacted subcontractors to assess their preparation to limit passenger exposure to COVID-19.

This is not an exhaustive list but it does provide guidance on the steps we are taking to keep our employees and customers safe as we work through the situation. Please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Bobby Vincent if you have any questions or concerns. More to come as the situation evolves....

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### **Halcon/Renzenberger Responses**

- Just to quickly address some of your concerns, Halcon is communicating closely with the Railroads to help ensure limiting potential exposure.
  - We have provided specific internal direction to our managers in the field to be relayed to our employees. We are following the guidance of the CDC and we understand that the Railroads are doing the same. This is a fluid situation that we are monitoring closely.
  - Are primary concern is the health and safety of our employees and ensuring the same for our clients while maintaining service. Thank you for your concerns and questions - we can discuss further any remaining questions you have.

- We have not determined any pay provisions if employees are forced off - at this time we have not seen a reduction in trip volume and with the concerns of the spread of COVID-19 we need to plan on how we cover trips. Certainly with pending legislation working its way through the House and Senate on leave and pay, we will follow that lead. While we want our drivers to be available for work, given the current environment if they have legitimate and reasonable concern for their safety, there would be no disciplinary action
  - Internally we have eliminated air travel – driving only
  - Cessation of large group (10 or more) meetings
  
  - Contingency planning in place for Dispatch mobilization and support services for business continuity.
  
  - By following the guidelines of the CDC we expect employees to not come to work if they are experiencing symptoms. There is protocol in place for anyone testing positive where notifications must be made. As this is a dynamic and fluid situation, we all need to follow common sense hygiene and social distancing practices while neither under-reacting or over-reacting. Van cleaning materials have been acquired and supplied and employees provided requirements to clean touch points between trips
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### **RCX Responses**

- Distributed Flyers from the CDC advising on steps to avoid infection and to stay at home if you're sick
  - Coordinating with the Railroads
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**To Receive these Updates, email us your name , company, and location at [1222@usw.org](mailto:1222@usw.org)**

**Getting Help:** Your Location Steward should be the first stop in trying to get your union contract questions answered or if you have a problem. However, we understand that it's sometimes hard to reach a Steward. The next and quickest way to get some help is:

**The Union Driver Hotline at (866)203-4960.**

**Email us at: [1222@usw.org](mailto:1222@usw.org).**

**Union Area Representative Contact Information:** Here are the contact numbers for our four Union Area Representatives:

**Northeast States: Jeff Kramer** – Phone: (317) 691-7690

Email: [jkramer@organizing.usw.org](mailto:jkramer@organizing.usw.org)

(Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Wisconsin)

**Southeast States: Darryl Turner** – Phone: (205) 253-3016

Email: [dturner@organizing.usw.org](mailto:dturner@organizing.usw.org)

(Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia)

**Western States: William Strizich** – Phone: (406) 870-3333

Email: [wstrizich@aol.com](mailto:wstrizich@aol.com)

(Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming)

**Southwestern States: Jackie Bell** – Phone: (817) 343-8862

Email: [jbelle@organizing.usw.org](mailto:jbelle@organizing.usw.org)

(Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas)