

No. 125/2020

13 March 2020

TO: ALL BRANCHES

Dear Colleagues,

Royal Mail Group - Coronavirus Precautions & Hygiene – Supply Shortages of Gloves, Sanitizer Wipes, Soap, Detergents and Paper Towels:

The Health, Safety & Environment Department continues to work in liaison with the Royal Mail Safety, Health & Environment Team, Royal Mail Assets and Royal Mail Procurement Teams as well as Royal Mail Property & Facilities Services (RMP&FS) during the current Coronavirus outbreak.

The Health, Safety & Environment Department has been heavily inundated with various enquiries and questions on the Coronavirus Covid-19 Pandemic on top of our existing extremely heavy workload and commitments being dealt with by our small department. Please bear that in mind and that instantaneous replies are not always possible. However, rest assured all matters of importance are being dealt with.

As an added precaution and taking account of various advice received, Royal Mail Group agreed to provide Antiseptic/Sanitizer Wipes and Gloves, as branches will know.

Royal Mail Assets and Procurement advised us that demand for antiseptic wipes has hugely outstripped supply across the UK, and following a period of increased buying, Royal Mail Group were unable to keep up with demand, so exhausted all of the Company's supplier's stocks of wipes across the UK.

Royal Mail Group Assets and Procurement have confirmed that they have purchased:

- **336,200 Alcohol wipes between 11th February 2020 & 4th March 2020**
- **182,500 pairs of gloves between 24th January 2020 & 4th March 2020**

As we know, there is now also a well-publicised national shortage of wipes, gels etc. and Royal Mail Group have now exhausted all their supplier's stocks.

Royal Mail Procurement have been actively looking for alternative suppliers, but this is a UK national shortage, which we understand is a nationwide position and not a Royal Mail position of choice. However, Royal Mail are continuing to talk with existing and new potential suppliers and are awaiting confirmation on back orders.

Currently Royal Mail do have a supply of gloves in stock. Suppliers have advised Royal Mail Group that they do not have the same concerns over glove supply, as they do with Antiseptic Wipes. There are also other glove lines that Royal Mail can switch to, if there becomes a shortage of the current type. At this point, the suppliers are not envisaging the glove supply

running out. That being said there is a high demand for small sizes, which is affecting stocks and Royal Mail is looking for confirmation on this and identifying if there are alternative styles, or other suppliers to bridge the gap.

With regards to Sanitising Gel & Dispensers, the current position of Royal Mail Group is that their Health & Wellbeing and the Safety Health and Environment Risk & Improvement Team's decision is not to provide sanitising dispensers and gel. Their conclusion is that it is far more effective and efficient to promote regular handwashing with soap and water as they conclude that Royal Mail is not a high-risk environment, in comparison to hospitals or care homes where Sanitising Gel is used as standard. The CWU Health, Safety & Environment has challenged them in respect of the availability of hand washing facilities out on Royal Mail and Parcelforce Deliveries.

In relation to 'Face Mask Requirements & Regulations' Royal Mail state that their advice from the World Health Organisation and UK Agencies guidance on this, is that these are only effective and beneficial to stop the spread of the virus for:-

- People who are ill, coughing and sneezing to reduce them from spreading the virus to others.
- People who are caring for, or in close contact with someone who is infected. People who are healthy, only need to wear a mask if they are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-nCoV infection.

Additionally, many masks being sold to the public are ineffective for Virus protection for a number of reasons. Firstly, they are not effective against respiratory illnesses like the flu and COVID-19 and won't stop the wearer from inhaling small airborne particles, which can cause infection. Nor do these masks form a snug seal around the face. Most experts only recommend surgical masks for people who already show symptoms of coronavirus, in order to help prevent spreading the virus around by protecting others nearby when the infected person coughs or sneezes. Royal Mail Group policy therefore, based on expert advice, is not to issue face masks for protection during flu pandemics, therefore RMG would not be issuing masks as PPE against Coronavirus.

The very latest update is as follows as of yesterday evening 12 March 2020.

- Ø Suppliers are being scoped all over the UK.
- Ø There is an ample supply of gloves to meet demand.
- Ø 300 Boxes containing half a million antiseptic wipes have arrived and will be despatched on a priority basis.
- Ø Soap, detergents and paper towel supplies have also be replenished.
- Ø Royal Mail Assets expect to have better provisions and stocks over the next two weeks by when suppliers expect to meet Royal Mail's demands.

The Health, Safety & Environment Department will be meeting Royal Mail Assets and Royal Mail Procurement on Monday, to discuss a number of things including an update on this important issue. Further updates will be issued to Branches in due course.

Yours Sincerely

Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer



Coronavirus
Precautions Hygien

CWU 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX
email: info@cwu.org Tel: 020 8971 7200 Fax: 020 8971 7300
General Secretary: Dave Ward

 @DaveWardGS  Dave Ward CWU



National Assets Supply Chain Communication

Dave Joyce
National Health & Safety Officer
Communication Workers Union
150 The Broadway
Wimbledon
London
SW19 1RX

Coronavirus Precautions & Hygiene – Non-Provision of Gloves and Sanitizer: In relation to Letter reference_E4/DJ/Imp

Dear Dave,

In response to your concerns around Non-Provision of Gloves and Sanitizer, I can confirm that this issue is naturally important to us and has been at the forefront of our activity over recent weeks. In response to the current requirement for additional items as per the WTLs and Communications we have purchased

- 336,200 Alcohol wipes between 11th February 2020 & 4th March 2020
- 182,500 pairs of gloves between 24th January 2020 & 4th March 2020

As we know there is now also a well-publicised national shortage of wipes and we unfortunately have now exhausted all our supplier's stocks of wipes.

Procurement are looking for alternative suppliers but as this is a national shortage I am sure you will appreciate that this is a nationwide position not a Royal Mail position. However, we are continuing to talk with our suppliers and waiting confirmation on back orders.

Currently we have a supply of gloves in stock. Our suppliers have advised they do not have the same concerns over glove supply, as they are not supplied from China. There are also other glove lines that we could move to if there was a shortage. At this point our suppliers are not envisaging supply running out. That being said we have seen high demand for small sizes which is affecting stocks and we are looking for confirmation on this and identifying if there is an alternative style or supplier.

With regards to Sanitising Gel & Dispensers the current advice from Group Health & Wellbeing and SHE Risk & Improvement is not to provide sanitising dispensers. It is far more effective and efficient to promote regular handwashing with soap and water as we are not a high-risk environment such as a hospital or care home where they are used as standard.



National Assets Supply Chain Communication

Face Mask Requirements & Regulations. The World Health Organization [guidance](#) on when to use a mask says states that it is only beneficial to stop the spread of the virus for:-

- People who are ill, coughing and sneezing to reduce them from spreading the virus to others.
- People who are caring for, or in close contact with someone who is infected. People who are *healthy, only need to wear a mask if they are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-nCoV infection.*

RMG policy is not to issue face masks for protection during flu pandemics therefore we would not be issuing masks as PPE against Coronavirus as our people should not be at risk of close contact with an infected person, (defined as within 2 metres, for more than 15 minutes), even if they were delivering to their doorstep. They would need to take care when delivering to anyone who appeared ill to minimise their time on the doorstep and keep at a distance to avoid being coughed or sneezed on. They would not be caring for someone as part of their work role and we would hope that anyone infected with the virus would be isolated at home and not at work.

Further information on the use of face masks can be found on the [WHO website](#).

If you have any other concerns or question please don't hesitate to get in touch

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary".

Gary Yeo FdSc Logistics

National Asset Manager

Royal Mail Logistics

Bexhill-On-Sea Delivery Office

Devonshire Square, Bexhill-on-Sea TN40 1AA

07872 636 537

gary.yeo@royalmail.com