

NVAC PRESIDENT'S CORNER

We are all in this together. It's scary, spooky, something we have never seen before. But, we know what we did wrong with the Spanish Flu that killed millions world wide. We know what we did wrong with the Swine Flu that killed hundreds of thousands. We have learned and we know what we have to do.

Wash our hands for 20 seconds, regularly and whenever we think we may have touched a contaminated surface. Dry them carefully, taking all the water and soap off each surface, front back and sides.

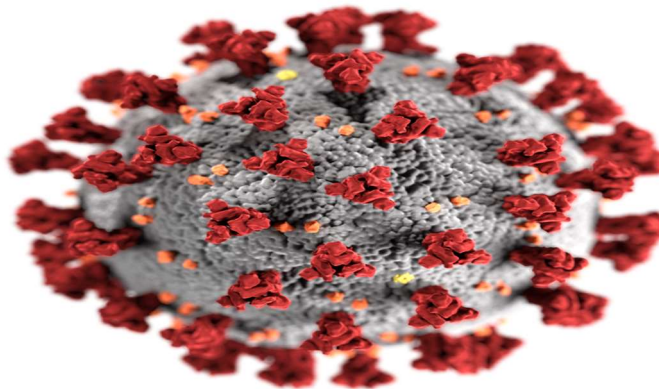
Always vampire cough- cover our mouths with the inner elbow.

Stay 6 feet from each other, to the extent we can. I know how hard that may be and I know it is often impossible because we have veterans to take care of and family and even those for whom we are responsible in the community. But, coughs travel 3 feet or more and sneezes can travel 6 feet so be careful, for all our sakes.

Eat well, sleep well, do what you can to reduce the stress we all feel.

We are ready for this. We know how to treat the symptoms. Worse is coming but if we all do what we should, we will get through this and be an example that people will talk about. We take care of ourselves so we can take care of veterans.

Alma L. Lee



BY CDC/ ALISSA ECKERT, MS; DAN HIGGINS, MAM

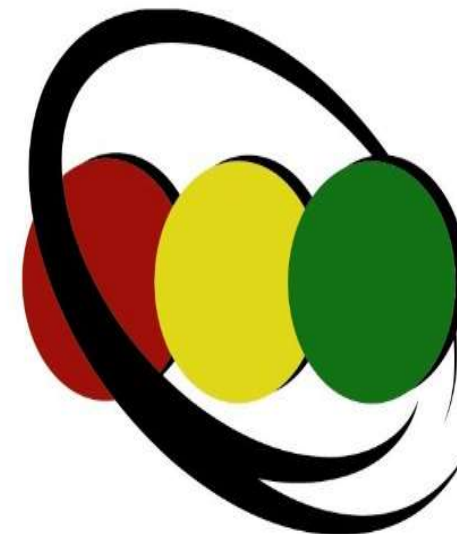
Workers' Compensation

A federal employee who contracts the Coronavirus Disease – 2019, known as COVID-19, while in performance of their job duties would have the full coverage of the FECA for related medical treatment and for wage loss or disability related to that condition or associated complications.

It is important to note that the employee must actually be diagnosed with COVID-19 to potentially be afforded coverage. To establish coverage, the employee must submit a medical report from a qualified physician reflecting a positive test result for COVID-19 based on established employment-related exposure to COVID-19. If the physician refuses to administer the test due to shortage or CDC Guidelines, they should notate it in the medical report. **The FECA does not authorize payment for provision of preventive measures such as quarantines.** (<https://www.dol.gov/owcp/dfec/InfoFECACoverageCoronavirus.htm>) **If you have COVID-19 questions, please contact coronavirus@afge.org.**

COVID-19

This brochure is designed to provide AFGE Union Representatives and bargaining unit employees with relevant information in one place.



Out of Many/ **One Union**
AFGE NVAC/AFL-CIO

CONTINUED ACTION

NVAC continues to fight for the expansion of Worker's Compensation benefits and hazard pay. We also demand that VA meet with us to develop a coherent and proper response!

MASTER AGREEMENT

DID YOU KNOW OUR MASTER AGREEMENT HAS A SECTION ON PANDEMICS?

Section 7 of Article 30 does a few things:

- Requires that employees be issued appropriate individual PPE as recommended by OSHA
- Requires that VA have sufficient PPE, such that employees are not required to reuse or share it
- Requires that VA fit test respirators if it is required for health and safety
- Requires that employees who get sick will be granted sick leave or LWOP, at their request.
- Requires that employees have no charge to leave if they are sent home, but are not sick.
- Allows for temporary telework and waiver of usual telework requirements

OTHER ARTICLES PROVIDE FOR RELAXED REQUIREMENTS DUE TO “EMERGENCIES”

If you have questions about the Master Agreement, please contact nvacattorney@afge.org.

NEW LAW!

On March 18, 2020, the President signed into law the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Notably, it provides the following:

- Two weeks of paid sick leave for employees affected by the pandemic, including those who are quarantined, caring for family members with the virus or quarantined, or caring for children whose school or childcare facility has been closed.
- Free COVID-19 **testing** without co-pays or deductibles.
- The Department of Labor shall issue guidelines implementing the law.
- The requirements under the Act expire on December 31, 2020.

** Corrected to show that most federal employees, including VA employees, are NOT covered under the paid-FMLA portions of this law. The Council continues to push for legislation covering ALL federal employees.*

OSHA REQUIREMENTS

(<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/standards.html>)

OSHA STANDARDS

There is no specific OSHA standard covering COVID-19. However, some OSHA requirements may apply to preventing occupational exposure to COVID-19.

- Employers are required to furnish to each worker “employment and a place of employment, which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.” (Section 5(a)(1) of the [Occupational Safety and Health \(OSH\) Act of 1970, 29 USC 654\(a\)\(1\)](#))
- OSHA's Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) standards, which require using gloves, eye and face protection, and respiratory protection. ([29 CFR 1910 Subpart I](#))
- For those who are providing direct care of patients with known or suspected COVID-19, practice infection control procedures:
 - engineering controls (e.g., airborne infection isolation rooms);
 - administrative controls (e.g., cohorting patients, designated HCP);
 - work practices (e.g., handwashing, disinfecting surfaces);
 - appropriate use of PPE; and,
 - ***Appropriate respiratory protection is required for all healthcare personnel providing direct care of these patients.***