

Memorandum

DATE: March 17, 2020

TO: All Employees

FROM: Brendan R. Shannon, Director of Human Resources

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Crisis -- Communication, Leaves of Absence and Wellness Resources

As you know, the COVID-19 crisis is affecting MTS's normal operations. The purposes of this communication are to:

- Outline MTS's COVID-19 employee communication plan
- Provide leave of absence information
- Outline temporary policy changes in place until April 15, 2020
- Provide health and wellness information

Communication:

It is imperative that employees communicate with their direct supervisor or department head regarding their ability to work and any need for a leave of absence throughout the crisis. As the COVID-19 crisis develops, guidance for employees will likely change. To facilitate quick and effective communication, MTS has established external web pages (available from any computer or smartphone) that will host current employee guidance. Additionally, each employee will receive text message updates from MTS if there are significant changes in our response to the crisis and whenever new content is posted on the COVID-19 employee web pages. Employees are encouraged to check the web page for their employee group frequently for updated guidance.

Bus Operations: www.sdmts.com/bus-operations-emergency-updates

Bus Maintenance: www.sdmts.com/bus-maintenance-emergency-updates

Rail Operations: www.sdmts.com/rail-operations-emergency-updates

Rail Maintenance: www.sdmts.com/rail-maintenance-emergency-updates

Transit Enforcement: www.sdmts.com/transit-enforcement-emergency-updates

Administrative Departments and Supervisors: www.sdmts.com/management-emergency-updates

Health Guidance:

The [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov) is the best source for information on the COVID-19 crisis and MTS will continue to follow CDC guidance. Current guidance includes:

- Everyone should take [precautionary measures](#) including avoiding contact with others when possible, maintaining a social distance (6+ feet) during person-to-person contact, washing or sanitizing their hands frequently, disinfecting hard surfaces, etc.



- Employees who are sick (e.g., fever over 100.4, respiratory illness symptoms) must stay home until they are cough and fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever or symptom-reducing medication. Additionally, employees must follow the guidance of their healthcare professionals regarding when it is safe to return to work if they become sick.
- Employees who return from travel to “Level 3” areas based on the [most-recent CDC listing](#) must stay out of the workplace and self-quarantine for 14 days to ensure they are not infected before returning to work. The list of “Level 3” areas will likely change so please check frequently if you have recently traveled or plan to travel. Of course, per longstanding CDC guidance, all non-essential travel plans should be canceled.
- Employees who are over 65 years old or have certain underlying medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, immunocompromised) should stay out of work and self-quarantine for 14 days.

The above is a brief summary of current guidance from the CDC and San Diego County Public Health Services; please check the [CDC website](#) and the [County Website](#) frequently for updates.

Attendance Policies:

As you know, MTS performs an essential function in the community; San Diegans who rely on public transportation to meet their basic needs are counting on all employees who are well and not on self-quarantine to come to work. MTS has a variety of longstanding disciplinary policies to discourage chronic absenteeism. From March 15, 2020 to April 15, 2020, those policies are suspended and employees will not incur discipline (attendance points / occurrences) if they are absent from work because they are ill, quarantined or need to care for a family member who is ill or quarantined. All call-in procedures (absence notification) and policies regarding tardiness still apply and the usual progressive discipline will be imposed. **It is very important that each employee communicate with their supervisor regarding changes in their ability to work and their estimated leave duration if they are unable to work.** Additionally, since ridership has declined, some departments may offer voluntary leaves of absence as we adjust service levels to meet demand. As always, employees who are absent for any reason will be required to use their accrued leave balances as required by applicable policy and/or Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Protected Leave Status and Disability:

Under normal circumstances, employees who would like to use protected leave (FMLA/CFRA) must apply for leave and submit a healthcare provider certification regarding their need for leave to the Human Resources Department. Per CDC guidance, based on the current strain on the healthcare system, MTS is suspending the healthcare provider certification requirement from March 15, 2020 to April 15, 2020. Employees seeking leave under the FMLA/CFRA for a serious health condition or to care for a family member with a serious health condition, as defined in our policies, should inform their supervisor of their need for leave. Eligible employees will receive temporary FMLA/CFRA approval communications from the Human Resources Department. Written notices of eligibility and approval will be provided as soon as practicable, but potentially after the employee returns to work.

Employees who are absent due to their own medical condition or to care for a sick family member may be eligible for State Disability Insurance benefits and/or Paid Family Leave benefits. More information and online applications are available at www.edd.ca.gov/disability.

Confidentiality / Questions: Employees are not encouraged or required to share the details of their medical condition(s) with their supervisors. Employees requiring special accommodations and employees who have questions about medical leave should contact Lisa-Marie Imdieke, Human Resources Representative II at lisa-marie.imdieke@sdmts.com or 619-557-4550.

Wellness and Employee Assistance Program (“EAP”):

This unprecedented crisis has imposed unique stresses and temporary life changes on us all. One of the best defenses against illness is maintaining a healthy lifestyle. To the extent possible, employees are encouraged to model healthy behaviors for their dependents (e.g., exercise, healthy eating) during and after the crisis.

MTS provides an EAP that offers all employees, and anyone who lives with an MTS employee, free behavioral health resources and confidential counseling. Visit www.mhn.com/members or call 1-800-535-4985 to seek assistance. Use the company code “SDMTS” to register for services. Behavioral health services and counseling are also available through your MTS healthcare plan. The EAP and MTS’s healthcare providers offer telephone/videoconference counseling so you can seek assistance while maintaining the CDC recommended social distancing.

cc: Post on all Agency Bulletin Boards
Post on all COVID-19 web pages
Text link to all employees