

ESSENTIAL *Delivery* WORKERS

BRIEFING BOOK



BUSINESS UNUSUAL

ADDRESSING ESSENTIAL WORKERS' NEEDS
DURING & AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

a Collaboration Between
the Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics &
the University of Colorado Boulder MENV

LEAD AUTHOR:

EMMA LAYMAN

ESSENTIAL *Delivery* WORKERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stay-at-home orders have increased reliance on delivery services. Postal employees—including those working for the United States Postal Service (USPS), UPS, FedEx, DHL and Amazon delivery, among others—have been essential in sorting and delivering necessary items to businesses and homes every day. At-risk individuals and those limiting outside excursions rely on delivery services to provide necessities such as food, prescription drugs, relief checks, and, in some states, mail-in ballots. Without these delivery workers many people would have impaired access to necessary goods (including food), communications, channels of conveyance, and ability to participate in the democratic process. Yet, to make all this possible, delivery workers risk exposure to COVID-19 while on the job.

The volume of packages these workers must deliver has significantly increased as a result of both (1) a growing consumer demand for doorstep delivery of items they typically buy at brick and mortar retail outlets and (2) a rise in the number of workers testing positive for the coronavirus and needing to take time off. Some USPS workers have shared that they now work ten hour days, six days a week to keep up with demand.¹ This has taken a toll: nearly 60 postal and delivery workers have died, over 2,500 employees have tested positive for the virus, and thousands more are being quarantined.^{2,3}

Delivery workers constantly encounter high risk situations on the job. Workers must sort packages and mail together, where it is hard to enforce six foot distancing. Workers report that physical distancing efforts have been ineffective at best, often lax, and absent at worst.² Additionally, many parcel distribution facilities lack proper cleaning supplies and protective gear, though some have recently installed cough/sneeze guards to the workplace.⁴ Workers also complain of bathrooms without soap and paper towels and of delivery trucks that haven't been cleaned or sanitized.⁴

Many customers stuck at home enjoy interacting with delivery workers, who may provide the only proximate human contact they have. Unfortunately, these interactions increase the risk of spreading the virus. To limit close contact, some carriers no longer require signatures for packages. The average age of USPS workers is 45 (and in the not-so-distant past it has been closer to 55). This may put some delivery workers at a higher risk of contracting and experiencing serious complications of the coronavirus.⁵

While delivery workers provide others with essential goods, many workers are challenged to meet their own needs - packages are typically delivered during regular business hours which restricts their ability to shop at stores with limited supplies and operating hours.

¹ Collman, A. (2020, April 3). USPS mail carriers say the service isn't doing enough to protect them from the coronavirus and are mixing DIY sanitizer and buying gloves online to stay safe. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-usps-workers-say-doing-too-little-to-protect-them-2020-4>

² Hogrogian, P. (2020, April 30). Mail Handlers Union: 2,081 postal workers infected with COVID-19, 46 deaths as of April 28th. *PostalReporter.com*. <https://www.postal-reporter.com/blog/mail-handlers-union-2081-postal-workers-infected-with-covid-19-46-deaths-as-of-april-28th/>

³ Garland, M., Macaraeg, S., & Colleen, W. (2020, May 2). COVID-19 deaths among FedEx workers in Newark leave families, employees questioning company's response. USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/05/02/coronavirus-least-8-fatal-cases-fedex-workers-complaints-mount/3071150001/>

⁴ Hershings, S. (2020, March 24). Postal Workers Say They Lack Supplies, Training To Protect Themselves From Virus. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/24/820330579/postal-workers-say-they-lack-supplies-training-to-protect-them-selves-from-virus>

⁵ Data USA. (n.d.). Postal Service Mail Carriers. <https://datausa.io/profile/soc/postal-service-mail-carriers>

The briefing book related to essential last mile postal and delivery workers provides the following information:

Work & Risks for Postal & Delivery Workers

Postal and delivery workers face risks to health and well-being due to an increase in the volume of packages, and the demands this has put on workers such as efficiency and longer hours. Many companies are not providing employees with personal protective equipment. Additionally, customers are not following social distancing guidelines.

Work-life Nexus: Expectations, Terms & Benefits Of Employment

Postal and delivery workers have seen their hours increase while receiving minimal benefits and protections. Some employees have been given paid sick leave, while many contract workers have not been promised any benefits.

Beyond The Job Risks To Health & Well-being

Outside of the workplace, postal and delivery workers may spread the virus to community and family members due to a variety of conditions. Workers may also face risks related to financial security and food access. Workers of color may face risks related to face coverings during deliveries due to racial profiling.

Adequacy & Resilience of the Postal & Delivery Workforce

The postal and delivery workforce is under increased stress and pressure to meet consumer demand. The USPS - which serves every American - is experiencing extreme financial struggles, decreasing its resilience. The federal government must provide financial aid to the USPS despite President Trump's wish to privatize this essential service.

Reasons to Address the Risks to Essential Postal & Delivery Workers

Postal and delivery workers provide consumers across the US with essential and non-essential goods, yet this demand has increased worker risks related to the coronavirus. Without protecting these workers, the well-being of many Americans will be threatened. We must do our part to protect these workers.

Key Facts about Postal & Delivery Workers

What we know about these workers, with important data about what they bring to the workplace.

Ways to Protect Postal & Delivery Workers

Implementing the provided protective measures will better safeguard the health and well-being of postal and delivery workers, as well as ensure affordable access to mail services for all Americans.

ESSENTIAL DELIVERY WORKERS BRIEFING BOOK

*Emma Layman - Lead Author
Nicole Civita, JD, LLM - Senior Author*

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Essential Delivery Workers

Joseph Alvarado, 38, goes to work every day to deliver hundreds of packages to customers in Orange Co, California. These packages include essential items like medicine and food, as well as superfluous boredom buys like a new jacket or pillow. Alvarado has delivered Amazon packages for three years, though he isn't technically an Amazon employee. Alvarado works for a third party logistics company contracted by Amazon to deliver packages. Contract workers are often tracked using GPS technology to monitor whether delivering packages fast enough. Over the course of 10 hours, Alvarado makes 153 stops to deliver over 200 packages. Along the way, he risks exposure to the coronavirus from customers, their gates, and doors. Alvarado and other delivery workers are exposed to this risk, yet don't receive the time or supplies necessary to keep themselves safe. Delivery vans do not get cleaned between shifts and many workers do not even have time to wash their hands. Many of these workers, including Alvarado, can't afford health insurance and do not receive paid sick leave, or any form of compensation for the risks they endure.



ON THE JOB RISKS TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

COVID-19 in the Workplace

Postal delivery workers risk exposure to the novel coronavirus on a daily basis, both in the workplace and when making deliveries. Workers have reported that social distancing and other COVID-preventative measures are not enforced in delivery centers. Additionally, many customers approach and touch delivery workers, flouting social distancing guidelines when it comes to the person on their porch..

Social distancing guidelines have been hard to enforce in mailrooms where more than 70 people often work together at once in a cramped space.⁶ Drivers not only face social distancing challenges in delivery centers and offices, but also when delivering packages to homes. One worker said: **“we've been told not to go up to people, and the first thing 50% of the people do as soon as they hear me is walk out of their house – literally up to me – to grab the mail. Maybe because it's something to do. That's the scariest part of my day.”**⁷ Because postal and delivery workers interact with so many coworkers and customers each day, failing to maintain the recommended distance can have grave impacts. Additionally, it has been reported that workers with coronavirus symptoms have continued working.

⁶ Abramson, A. (2020, April 16). Postal Workers Were Already Worried About Getting Sick – Now Their Jobs Could Be on the Line, Too. Time. <https://time.com/5821945/united-states-postal-workers-coronavirus/>

⁷ Collman, A. (2020, April 3). USPS mail carriers say the service isn't doing enough to protect them from the coronavirus and are mixing DIY sanitizer and buying gloves online to stay safe. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-us-ps-workers-say-doing-too-little-to-protect-them-2020-4>

Worse, the USPS has not been informing employees that worked in close proximity to individuals who have tested positive for the coronavirus.⁸ The lack of transparency with delivery workers about their confirmed COVID-19 exposure is especially perilous because they not only work in such close proximity to other employees, but they also travel around communities, touching surfaces and encountering customers all day long. A study by the National Institutes of Health found that the coronavirus is detectable on cardboard for up to 24 hours and on plastic and steel for up to two or three days, though more studies are needed to reduce uncertainty about how long the coronavirus remains stable on various surfaces.⁹ While the coronavirus is primarily spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets, the CDC believes people may contract the coronavirus by touching an infected surface and then touching their mouth or nose.¹⁰ Thus, workers risk exposing themselves and others to the coronavirus when delivering mail and packages.

Personal protection equipment (PPE) can reduce the risk of exposure to and spread of coronavirus, but many delivery companies do not have sufficient PPE for workers, including facemasks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and even basic cleaning supplies like soap and paper towels. Workers in a USPS delivery center reported that bathrooms lacked soap and paper towels, severely limiting their ability to follow CDC guidelines related to handwashing.¹¹ In some cases, delivery drivers have begun bringing their own sanitary wipes to work in order to clean delivery trucks before their shifts. Many delivery workers who are contracted to work for Amazon report that they are not receiving supplies to clean vans or time to wash their hands between shifts.¹² These contracted employees face greater risks because Amazon, and other companies using contracted employees, are not responsible for their health insurance and often evade other duties and liabilities.¹³

Other risks associated with continued job performance

Postal and delivery companies have experienced a surge in deliveries as people stuck at home rely on these services for both essential and non-essential goods. Due to the high volume of packages that must be delivered - many USPS employees have seen their workload double.¹⁴ Workers have been pressured to go to work and pick up extra shifts despite coronavirus symptoms. This has left many workers afraid of retaliation if they report coronavirus-like symptoms or are unable to show up to work for any reasons. One such worker said **"I have been coming in sick because I'm worried that I'll lose my job or just be punished if I call out...I am 23, and I have no savings, and I have a 4-month-old son."**¹⁵ Countless postal and delivery workers have notified supervisors of sore throats, coughs, and aches but have been told to come into work anyway.^{15,16}

⁸ Jameel, M. (2020, April 14). Postal Workers Say USPS Isn't Telling Them When Colleagues Test Positive for COVID-19. ProPublica.

<https://www.propublica.org/article/postal-workers-say-usps-isnt-telling-them-when-colleagues-test-positive-for-covid-19-despite-promising-to>

⁹ National Institutes of Health (NIH). (2020). *New coronavirus stable for hours on surfaces*.

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/new-coronavirus-stable-hours-surfaces>

¹⁰ Center for Disease Control. (Revised 2020, May 22). How COVID-19 Spreads. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html>

¹¹ Hershings, S. (2020, March 24). Postal Workers Say They Lack Supplies, Training To Protect Themselves From Virus. NPR.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/03/24/820330579/postal-workers-say-they-lack-supplies-training-to-protect-them-selves-from-virus>

¹² Kirkham, C. & Dastin, J. (2020, March 25). Delivery drivers face pandemic without sick pay, insurance, sanitizer. Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-delivery-drivers-i/delivery-drivers-face-pandemic-without-sick-pay-insurance-sanitizer-idUSKBN21C1CJ>

¹³ Hadden, J. (2020, April 2). Amazon delivery drivers share what it's like to be on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic, including not having time to wash their hands and uncleaned vans. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/why-amazon-delivery-workers-feel-exposed-and-vulnerable-to-coronavirus-2020-3>

¹⁴ Abramson, A. (2020, April 16). Postal Workers Were Already Worried About Getting Sick - Now Their Jobs Could Be on the Line, Too. Time.

<https://time.com/5821945/united-states-postal-workers-coronavirus/>

¹⁵ Abrams, R. & Silver-Greenberg, J. (2020, March 21). 'Terrified' Package Delivery Employees Are Going to Work Sick. The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/21/business/coronavirus-ups-fedex-xpo-workers.html>

¹⁶ Jameel, M. (2020, April 14). Postal Workers Say USPS Isn't Telling Them When Colleagues Test Positive for COVID-19. ProPublica.

<https://www.propublica.org/article/postal-workers-say-usps-isnt-telling-them-when-colleagues-test-positive-for-covid-19-despite-promising-to>

WORK-LIFE NEXUS: EXPECTATIONS, TERMS & BENEFITS OF EMPLOYMENT

Whether or not postal and delivery workers have access to benefit programs that safeguard health and well-being is dependent on many factors including their job position, whether or not workers are contracted employees, and the number of hours they work a week. Many contract workers are not guaranteed paid sick leave, affordable health insurance, or workers compensation. While direct-hired postal and delivery employees receive slightly more benefits than contract workers, more needs to be done to guarantee that these workers have access to benefits while working in high risk positions.

Nearly 200,000 delivery workers are contract drivers for FedEx and Amazon, meaning they work for much smaller, less well-resourced companies that FedEx and Amazon have hired to deliver packages.¹⁷ When the delivery giants announce initiatives designed to support their employees (e.g., hazard pay or paid sick leave), these contract workers are excluded. As a result, they have seen very few changes in their health benefits or wages despite the increased risks of working during the pandemic. It is critical that postal and delivery workers receive these benefits as well as health insurance and access to online healthcare services.

Amazon uses two methods to contract workers - delivery service partners (DSP) and Amazon Flex. DSP drivers are hired by a third-party and then contracted to work for Amazon. When asked, Amazon said third-parties had to offer drivers time off, though they didn't specify the number of days or if workers would be given paid sick leave.¹⁸ Additionally, Amazon requires third-parties to offer health insurance coverage, but many workers said they opt-out of coverage due to the high out of pocket costs. Amazon Flex workers use their own vehicles to deliver Amazon packages and must deliver a certain number of packages per hour. These workers are able to apply to a grant that will provide them with two weeks of pay if diagnosed with the coronavirus or ordered to quarantine by the government or Amazon.¹⁸ As of May 7th, the grant program appears to still be in effect, though many workers have complained that actually receiving this paid sick leave has been extremely difficult.¹⁹ Overtime pay will be raised to double a worker's regular pay; workers were paid time and a half for working overtime pre-coronavirus.²⁰ Overtime pay will end on the 1st of June.²¹

DSP and Amazon Flex contract drivers received a wage increase of just \$2 per hour, making the new minimum wage \$15 per hour. This hazard pay ended on the 30th of April; the threat of COVID-19 remains.¹⁹

Some Amazon workers have gone on strike to protest the limited protections that their employer has provided. Strikes are expected to continue in an effort to get Amazon to provide paid sick leave to all employees.²² Such action is happening despite Amazon's history of discouraging unions and engagement of

¹⁷ Kaplan, A., Springer, S., & Oakes, C. (2020, April 1). FedEx drivers say they're not getting coronavirus protections other delivery workers receive. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/fedex-drivers-say-they-re-not-getting-coronavirus-protections-other-n1174031>

¹⁸ Kirkham, C. & Dastin, J. (2020, March 25). Delivery drivers face pandemic without sick pay, insurance, sanitizer. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-delivery-drivers-i/delivery-drivers-face-pandemic-without-sick-pay-insurance-sanitizer-idUSKBN21C1CJ>

¹⁹ Levin, S. (2020, May 7). Revealed: Amazon told workers paid sick leave law doesn't cover warehouses. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/may/07/amazon-warehouse-workers-coronavirus-time-off-california>

²⁰ O'Kane, C. (2020, April 2). Meghan McCain says essential workers should be paid double for "putting their lives on the line" during pandemic. CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/meghan-mccain-essential-workers-coronavirus-hazard-pay-double-grocery-store-delivery-amazon-first-responders/>

²¹ Del Ray, J. (2020, May 13). Amazon extends bonus pay for front-line workers but says it ends in June. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/5/13/21256756/amazon-pay-increases-frontline-warehouse-workers-covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic-may>

²² Paul, K. (2020, April 21). Hundreds of Amazon warehouse workers to call in sick in coronavirus protest. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/apr/20/amazon-warehouse-workers-sickout-coronavirus>

law firms that specialize in defeating organized labor.²³

FedEx is also heavily reliant on drivers that have been contracted through a third-party. Delivery workers employed directly with FedEx will receive up to two weeks of paid sick leave if they have been diagnosed with the coronavirus or placed under quarantine by medical professionals.²³ As of May 30th, workers can still receive two weeks of paid sick leave; however, employees have complained that asymptomatic colleagues have not been provided paid sick leave and are expected to report to work.²⁴ Wages and workers compensation has not changed for contracted drivers as a result of COVID-19. Many third-party companies do not have additional funds to provide workers with paid sick leave; unless FedEx works with third-party companies *do* develop and provide (or offset the cost of) benefits, these workers will not be compensated for providing essential services.

Other companies appear to have been more responsive to workers' requests for improved benefits:

UPS is offering 10 days of paid sick leave to all employees regardless of full- or part-time status. In order to receive paid sick leave, UPS employees must be directly impacted by coronavirus either by being diagnosed or having a family member who is diagnosed.²⁵ This access to paid sick leave was made possible through the Teamsters union. UPS will continue operating an emergency paid leave program indefinitely;²⁶ it is unclear how many hours or days of paid sick leave will be provided to workers through this program.

The USPS provides health insurance to workers through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) and has been working with unions to provide more benefits to workers in response to the coronavirus.²⁷ These unions include the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and the National Association of Letter Carriers, which have worked with USPS to provide 80 hours of paid sick leave to workers if they have been directly exposed to the coronavirus or if workers have symptoms representative of the coronavirus.^{28,29} APWU has also worked with USPS to hire more mail processing assistants until May 25th.²⁴ USPS employees are members of various other unions, though APWU seems to be making the largest strides in guaranteeing benefits for workers.

While the USPS and associated unions are working to protect employees (arguably more than private companies), they have received little help from the federal government. The USPS has been given a \$10 billion loan, which fails to adequately address the impacts of the coronavirus on their financial viability.³⁰ This can be attributed to President Trump's ongoing mission to privatize the USPS - an act that would leave 70 million Americans without access to affordable mail services.

²³ Kopytoff, V. (2014, January 16). How Amazon Crushed the Union Movement. Time. <https://time.com/956/how-amazon-crushed-the-union-movement/>

²⁴ Booker, C. (2020, May 3). Booker Presses FedEx on Workplace Safety Amid COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://www.booker.senate.gov/news/press/booker-presses-fedex-on-workplace-safety-amid-covid-19-pandemic>

²⁵ Ronan, D. (2020, March 23). UPS, Teamsters Agree on Sick Leave as Coronavirus Spreads. Transport Topics. <https://www.ttnews.com/articles/ups-takes-steps-slow-spread-virus-reaches-deal-sick-leave-teamsters>

²⁶ UPS (n.d.). UPS Employee Protection from Coronavirus. <https://www.ups.com/us/en/about/news.page>

²⁷ USPS. (n.d.). Compensation and Benefits. <https://about.usps.com/careers/working-usps/benefits.htm>

²⁸ American Postal Workers Union (n.d.). Temporary MOUs. <https://www.apwu.org/coronavirus>

²⁹ Rolando, F.V. (2020, April 17). COVID-19 Virus Crisis. National Association of Letter Carriers. <https://www.nalc.org/news/nalc-updates/body/4-17-20-statement.pdf>

³⁰ Heuvel, K.V. (2018, August 7). Trump's privatization plan would destroy the Postal Service. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-privatization-plan-would-destroy-the-postal-service/2018/08/07/caaf9a24-99a2-11e8-8d5e-c6c594024954_story.html

In general, postal and delivery workers have seen hours increase while wages have remained fairly stagnant. Many workers have been given paid sick leave, although some workers have only been given 10 days which will not allow them to quarantine for 14 days, as recommended by the CDC, and could easily be insufficient to allow a seriously ill worker to recover.³¹

BEYOND THE JOB RISKS TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Risks of exposure to COVID-19 to workers, families or community from non-workplace factors

The risks of exposure to COVID-19 to postal and delivery workers and their families or communities depends on many non-workplace factors, including transportation, housing and living conditions, childcare arrangements, a lack of access to information, and social distancing within the community. For postal and delivery workers, these risks may take form in the following ways:

- **Transportation risks.** Some workers may commute to and from their jobs via public transportation, putting them at greater risk of exposure by virtue of being in enclosed forms of mass transit and shared conveyance.
- **Housing/living conditions.** Many postal and delivery workers may live with others who are also working in high-risk industries, such as retail workers. Being in close contact with these persons may put all parties in a household--and in the respective workplaces--at an increased risk of exposure.
- **Risks from childcare arrangements.** Postal and delivery workers may be affected by the challenge of finding child care. Because schools and daycare centers have been closed, safe affordable child care options (difficult to find even under typical circumstances) have become ever more scarce. The lack of adequate childcare places a tremendous strain on working families with children. While a few states are working to mitigate the cost of childcare for essential workers, interactions with childcare providers may increase the child and family's risk of exposure to COVID-19. For example, Texas has created a portal that connects those needing child care with child care providers.³² In Tennessee, postal workers and other essential employees will receive free child care until June 15.³³ Some other states are working to cover most, if not all, child care expenses for essential employees.^{34,35}
- **Lack of social distancing in the community.** Because postal and delivery workers often leave packages and mail directly outside of people's homes, they risk exposing community members to COVID-19 if social distancing measures are not practiced by all parties. Even if workers practice social distancing, many walkers, runners, and bikers pass delivery workers on sidewalks or try to engage with workers without following maintaining a safe distance.

³¹ CDC. (n.d.). What to Do If You Are Sick. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

³² Rouege, C. (2020, April 10). Child care assistance available for essential workers in Texas through a new website. KHOU 11. <https://www.khou.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/child-care-assistance-for-essential-workers-in-texas/285-17715283-e8c3-4d5f-802d-d469e36f9897>

³³ Jones, L. (2020, April 17). State of Tennessee to pay for childcare for essential workers. News Channel 3 WREG Memphis. <https://wreg.com/news/state-of-tennessee-to-pay-for-childcare-for-essential-workers/>

³⁴ Hammond, S. (2020, April 5). Pritzker: Many essential workers qualify for child care assistance through new state program. The Herald News. <https://www.theherald-news.com/2020/04/05/pritzker-many-essential-workers-qualify-for-child-care-assistance-through-new-state-program/awpovyd/>

³⁵ Gonzalez, E. (2020, April 1). Emergency free child care available for essential workers in Colorado amid pandemic. Fox Denver. <https://kdvr.com/news/coronavirus/emergency-free-child-care-for-essential-workers-in-colorado-amid-pandemic/>

Risks associated with financial insecurity

Postal and delivery workers who are unable to go to work because of an illness, an ill family member, or because of exposure to someone who is ill, are likely at risk to economic harms from lost or reduced wages. Since postal and delivery workers have limited access to paid sick leave, employees unable to work will likely receive little to no financial compensation. The average American household has about \$8,800 in savings, though this number is highly dependent on the makeup of the household (single v. couple, children v. no children, and age).³⁶ Single postal and delivery workers under the age of 55 likely have the smallest amount in savings. If these employees are unable to work due to illness, it will likely be difficult for them to pay for living expenses, including rent/mortgage, child care, and food expenses. As a result, many postal and delivery workers continue to work despite feeling ill.³⁷

Postal service employees may face additional risks associated with financial insecurity as the USPS continues to experience a financial crisis while receiving little federal support. Beyond COVID-19, workers may risk losing their jobs as the USPS goes into more debt and President Trump threatens privatization of this essential agency.

Risks of Impaired Access to Food & Other Essentials

Postal and delivery workers may face increased risks of impaired access to food and other essentials during COVID-19 as a result of reduced store hours. Packages are delivered during daylight hours, Amazon says deliveries occur between 6:00am and 10:00pm,³⁸ which is the same window that most grocery stores are now open due to limited COVID hours. Many postal and delivery workers have begun working longer shifts as a result of increased demand; these long shifts may limit their ability to shop, though little has been reported on this risk.

Risks Associated with Face Coverings, Especially for Workers of Color

The CDC has encouraged Americans to wear cloth masks in public settings,³⁹ but this may put minority postal and delivery workers at risk. While many workers wear uniforms, some contract workers do not. For example, Amazon Flex workers, who drive their own vehicles, are not given uniforms but must buy their own shirts and vests.⁴⁰ This can put minority workers wearing face coverings--especially African American men--at an increased risk of racial profiling, suspicion and reactive treatment, and police interactions.⁴¹ Even in pre-pandemic America, many delivery workers have had customers call the police while they are making deliveries.⁴² COVID-19, mask wearing, and the elevated political polarization and explosive racial tensions in America at the time of writing (in late May 2020) can be expected to exacerbate the practice of customers reporting delivery workers to the police. Whether the result of a genuine misunderstanding or of far more pernicious and racist weaponization of public safety concerns, people of

³⁶ Martin, E. (2019, March 12). This chart shows how much money Americans have in savings at every age. CNBC Make It.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

³⁷ Katz, E. (2020, April 21). Unsanitized Bathrooms and Working While Sick: Postal Workers Flood OSHA With Coronavirus Complaints. Government Executive.

<https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2020/04/unsanitized-bathrooms-and-working-while-sick-postal-workers-flood-osha-coronavirus-complaints/164779/>

³⁸ Amazon. (n.d.). About Deliveries Shipped with Amazon. https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?no_deld=201910680

³⁹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, April 13). Use Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow Spread.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

⁴⁰ Menapace, B. (2019, May 22). Does Amazon Have a Delivery Driver Uniforms Problem? Ice T Thinks So. Promo Marketing Magazine.

<https://magazine.promomarketing.com/article/amazon-delivery-driver-uniforms-problem-ice-t/>

⁴¹ Aviles, G. (2020, April 9). Black men fear homemade coronavirus masks could exacerbate racial profiling. NBC News.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/black-men-fear-homemade-masks-could-exacerbate-racial-profiling-n1179236>

⁴² Malcolm, R. (2019, May 23). Amazon Flex Drivers' Lack Of Uniforms Lead To Delivery Mix-Ups. CBS Sacramento.

<https://sacramento.cbslocal.com/2019/05/23/amazon-flex-drivers-lack-of-uniforms-lead-to-delivery-mix-ups/>

color who perform delivery work, especially with their faces covered, may face elevated risk of contact with law enforcement, which can range from traumatizing to tragic.

ADEQUACY & RESILIENCE OF THE POSTAL & DELIVERY WORKFORCE

Postal and delivery drivers are racing to meet the increased demand caused by the COVID-19 pandemic which has increased pressure on workers, especially USPS employees. While Amazon has hired 80,000 new employees to meet delivery demands, other companies may find it hard to follow suit.⁴³ The USPS is already facing financial struggles which have only been exacerbated by the coronavirus. Postal and delivery workers are performing adequately, but the novel coronavirus is threatening the industry's long-term resiliency.

As postal and delivery forces are under increased stress to deliver more packages every day, one mitigation measure is to hire more employees. However, employees hired now will likely not be needed once delivery demand returns to pre-COVID levels. Thus, postal and delivery companies must determine the tradeoffs between increased performance and the financial implications of hiring more workers.

The USPS relies on first-class and marketing mail for a majority of its revenue, but these types of mail have dwindled dramatically as businesses close during COVID-19.⁴⁴ The USPS estimates that they will operate at a net loss of at least \$22 billion over the next eighteen months and over \$54 billion long term.⁴⁵ Hiring more workers is not an option when some sources estimate that the Postal Service does not have enough funds to continue operating past June, 2020.⁴⁶ To help maintain operations, the USPS was given a \$10 billion loan while airline companies were given \$50 billion in loans and grants.⁴⁰ Supporters of USPS say this loan is not enough and that the Postal Service needs closer to \$75 billion in financial aid.⁴⁷

If the coronavirus shutdowns continue to disrupt business and consumer habits, then the Postal Service will go further into debt, yet they have received little financial support from the federal government. In fact, President Trump threatened to veto any bill that would include additional relief for the Postal Service.⁴³ This is part of Trump's ongoing effort to privatize the USPS.⁴⁸ Refusing to support the Postal Service, and other delivery workers, will likely lead to an increase in workers diagnosed with the coronavirus, causing them to lose their jobs or go weeks without paid leave. This will impact the efficiency of delivery systems as well as consumers' abilities to receive essential goods via delivery, especially in rural areas that depend on the USPS' affordable mail services.

While other companies like Amazon, UPS, and FedEx have not been financially hurt by coronavirus, they are not responsible for delivering essential items like relief checks from the IRS, voting ballots, or nearly all of Veteran

⁴³ Hadden, J. (2020, April 2). Amazon delivery drivers share what it's like to be on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic, including not having time to wash their hands and uncleaned vans. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/wh-y-amazon-delivery-workers-feel-exposed-and-vulnerable-to-coronavirus-2020-3>

⁴⁴ Bogage, J. (2020, April 11). White House rejects bailout for U.S. Postal Service battered by coronavirus. Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/04/11/post-office-bailout-trump/>

⁴⁵ Brennan, M. (2020, April 10). Postmaster General statement on US Postal Service stimulus needs. USPS. <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/statements/041020-pmg-statement-on-usps-stimulus-needs.htm>

⁴⁶ Naylor, B. (2020, April 8). You've Got Less Mail: The Postal Service Is Suffering Amid The Coronavirus. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2020/04/08/828949609/youve-got-less-mail-the-postal-service-is-suffering-amid-the-coronavirus>

⁴⁷ Kosar, K.R. (2020, April 16). The Postal Service Is in Deep Trouble. Here's One Way to Get It Out. Politico. <https://www.politico.com/news/agenda/2020/04/16/the-right-way-to-bail-out-the-post-office-190271>

⁴⁸ Heuvel, K.V. (2018, August 7). Trump's privatization plan would destroy the Postal Service. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-privatization-plan-would-destroy-the-postal-service/2018/08/07/caaf9a24-99a2-11e8-8d5e-c6c594024954_story.html

Affairs' medicines.⁴² The USPS is vital to ensuring every American has access to a basic mail service that provides essential items, especially during the pandemic.⁴⁹ Many Americans living in rural areas depend on receiving mail from USPS - if the Postal Service is privatized or disbanded, 70 million Americans (21% of the US population) would have to pay more for their mail.⁵⁰ Many of these Americans depend on the Postal Service for paying bills, voting in elections, and receiving medications. The USPS is also contracted to make 30% of FedEx's deliveries and 55% of Amazon's deliveries; many of these deliveries occur in rural areas where providing delivery services is not profitable.⁴⁴ Additionally, if the USPS goes under, then over 600,000 more people will lose jobs - 75,000 of which are employed in rural areas. With fewer postal and delivery workers, those continuing to provide delivery services will face even greater pressure and demand to make sure essential packages get to customers.

REASONS TO ADDRESS THE RISKS TO ESSENTIAL POSTAL & DELIVERY WORKERS

Postal and delivery workers play a key role in providing Americans with both essential items and some of the non-essentials that make a socially distant existence more bearable. As users of postal and delivery services, we must consider what we owe to the workers who bring the things we need and want to our doorsteps, and we should advocate for fair treatment and risk mitigating measures.

Many of the risks associated with postal and delivery work is related to the high volume of items that consumers are ordering as "retail therapy" during the crisis.⁵¹ This increased volume has caused longer hours for delivery workers, heightened pressure and stress, and less time to engage in safe practices like hand washing and wiping down delivery vehicles. Consumers should consider the ethical implications of ordering nonessential goods at this time so that postal and delivery workers can focus on delivering medicine and other essentials in a timely manner, while reducing risks of exposure to employees.⁵² To improve the efficiency and safety of delivery workers, all workers should be provided with paid sick leave, guaranteeing health insurance, and hiring more workers to meet demand.

While companies like Amazon likely have the financial wherewithal to provide all workers with sufficient amounts of paid sick leave, the USPS is in a unique position - the Postal Service is facing the pandemic crisis amid an ongoing internal financial crisis. The USPS is funded solely through postage (i.e. stamps) and postal (i.e. mail) services. In 2018, the USPS had \$143 billion in liabilities and debt and because of the coronavirus, mail volume has dropped by 30% as businesses move online.⁵³ Yet little is being done by the government to support this essential service - a service that delivers mail to 160 million addresses, six days a week, to all Americans no matter what.⁵⁴ To maintain this universal service, the USPS must be supported by consumers and the federal government. While consumers can buy stamps and reduce workers' unnecessary exposure to coronavirus caused by ordering non-essential items, the federal government must include the USPS in relief packages. **We must support postal and delivery workers who risk their own well-being to guarantee ours.**

⁴⁹ Wehle, K. (2020, April 21). USPS is hanging on by a thread. The Hill. <https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/493920-usps-is-hanging-on-by-a-thread>

⁵⁰ Anderson, S., Klinger, S., & Wacamo, B. (2020, April 24). Policy Brief: The USPS and Rural America. Institute for Policy Studies. <https://inequality.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/IPS-policy-brief-USPS-Rural-America2.pdf>

⁵¹ Avins, J. (2020, March 25). Is it ethical to order deliveries during the coronavirus crisis?. Quartz. <https://qz.com/1823968/is-it-ethical-to-order-deliveries-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>

⁵² Torres, M. (2020, March 31). Why You Shouldn't Order Nonessential Packages During The Coronavirus Pandemic. HuffPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/non-essential-packages-coronavirus-pandemic_L5e7b8fbc5b62a1870d67f24

⁵³ Wehle, K. (2020, April 21). USPS is hanging on by a thread. The Hill. <https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/493920-usps-is-hanging-on-by-a-thread>

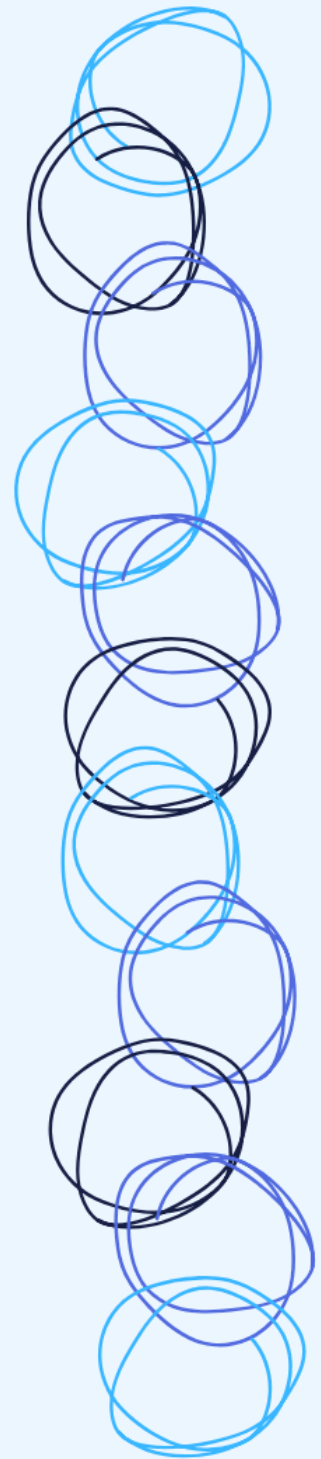
⁵⁴ Jones, S. (2020, April 17). The U.S. Postal Service Needs Help Now: 'The Situation Is Absolutely Dire'. Intelligencer. <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/04/will-republicans-help-the-coronavirus-kill-the-post-office.html>

Key Facts About Postal And Delivery Workers

1. Nearly 1.5 million Americans work in delivery centers or as drivers for USPS,⁵⁵ Amazon,⁵⁶ UPS,⁵⁷ and FedEx;⁵⁸ though nearly two-thirds of these employees work for the USPS and UPS.
2. Generally, more than 40% of postal and delivery workers identify as members of minority races.
 - In the USPS: 21% of employees are African American, 8% are Hispanic, and 8% are Asian American or Pacific Islander.⁴⁹
 - UPS considers their organization to be 40% ethnically diverse, with 23% of employees identifying as African American and 14% identify as Latino, though UPS has been accused of racial discrimination and harassment.⁵⁹

Given the ethnic and racial composition of these companies, there may be some barriers related to language and immigration status in these workplaces. Unfortunately, there is limited data to support or refute this assumption.

3. While there is limited data on the age of postal and delivery workers, the estimated average age is 45.⁴⁹ However, some say the postal workforce is aging, which may make delivery workers more vulnerable to the coronavirus.⁶⁰
4. Wages and incomes vary across companies; Amazon drivers make as little as \$25,000 a year while UPS drivers make over \$60,000 a year.⁶¹
⁶² While a salary of \$25,000 is above the national poverty line, individuals with dependents may face economic hardships.



⁵⁵ USPS. (2010). Workforce Diversity and Inclusion. https://about.usps.com/strategic-planning/cs09/CSPO_09_087.htm

⁵⁶ Peterson, H. (2019, December 19). Amazon to deliver 3.5 billion packages as it employs 75,000 drivers. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-package-delivery-business-growth-2019-12>

⁵⁷ UPS. (2015). UPS 2015 Corporate Sustainability Report. <https://sustainability.ups.com/media/ups-pdf-interactive/index.html>

⁵⁸ Baertlein, L. (2019, June 6). FedEx to hire 700 flexible rural and residential drivers. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-fedex-lastmile-exclusive/exclusive-fedex-to-hire-700-flexible-rural-and-residential-drivers-idUSKC N1T728S>

⁵⁹ Allen, J. (2016, September 27). UPS Has a Racism Problem. In These Times. http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/19503/ups_has_a_racism_problem

⁶⁰ Marshall-Genzer, N. (2017, May 16). The Postal Service wants you, millennials. Marketplace. <https://www.marketplace.org/2017/05/16/postal-service-wants-you-millennials/>

⁶¹ Indeed. (2020, March 29). Amazon.com - Driving Salaries in the United States. https://www.indeed.com/cmp/Amazon.com/salaries?job_category=driver

⁶² Truck Drivers Salary. (2020, February 20). UPS Driver Salary. www.truckdriverssalary.com/ups-driver-salary/

Ways to Protect Essential Delivery Workers

Postal and delivery workers are unable to work from home or remotely due to the nature of their job. The most important mitigation measures for reducing their risks of workplace exposure or illness include:

1. **Enforcing social distancing guidelines.** Workers in delivery centers must be trained on how to keep a safe distance from other employees and supervisors must implement these policies.
2. **Guaranteeing access to PPE** and materials necessary for hand washing/sanitization.
3. **Increasing breaks** and providing time (or support staff) to sanitize vehicles and stations between shifts.
4. **Reducing customer interactions.** This includes discontinuing the need for customer signatures on packages and educating the public about social distancing. Many delivery companies have already allowed workers to simply drop off items instead of passing them directly to recipients, but more needs to be done to protect workers from exposure risks from customers. Delivery companies could, for example, collaborate on public education campaigns to help shift customers' behavior norms in ways that are more protective of delivery worker safety.
5. **Providing health insurance and paid sick leave,** as well as updating policies to reflect current conditions. While some companies do provide paid sick leave to workers, the number of available days is often too few given the recommended quarantine guidelines for those who've tested positive for the coronavirus. Additionally, workers should be able to use paid sick leave without having to first get tested for coronavirus. To support individual and public health, paid sick leave benefits should be available always, not just during the pandemic.
6. **Notifying workers of the number of positive cases** in offices and packaging centers, enabling informed personal risk assessment. This is particularly important when workers have been in close physical proximity to each other, share vehicles or equipment, or interact with the same hard surfaces in close temporal proximity to each other.
7. **Increasing efforts to hire more employees.** Postal and delivery workers report working 10-12 hours a day, 6 days a week. Amazon has hired 80,000 more workers in order to reduce the stress and pressure on delivery workers; more companies should expand their ranks to reduce the strain on this workforce.
8. **Educating customers & working with law enforcement to combat racial profiling of delivery drivers** -- always and especially now that delivery personnel are likely to be wearing cloth face masks. Police officers and delivery companies should work together to ensure the safety of essential delivery workers, especially contract workers who may not have readily available proof that they work for a specific company.
 - Delivery companies should inform and educate customers, private security personnel, and public law enforcement officers that delivery drivers may be wearing face coverings and may not be in uniform. Employers (including third party companies that contract with major carriers) should also make sure that workers can be easily identified. This can be done by providing magnetic signs to place on private vehicles, vests or sashes that can be worn over street clothes, and a letter or placard indicating the worker's employer and the relevant contractual relationship with a carrier, with contact information for easy verification.
 - Customers concerned about the presence of persons handling packages without uniforms and/or while wearing masks should not immediately call law enforcement. Instead, customers should contact the major carriers with questions and concerns. If circumstances seem to merit a call to the police, citizens should avoid making exaggerated reports or racialized claims, endeavoring to enable investigation without prompting escalation.
 - When responding to such calls or otherwise investigating conduct typical to delivery work that may also arouse suspicions (e.g., slow or repeated driving through neighborhoods, approaching buildings, and handling parcels) security personnel and law enforcement officers should presume that the person involved may be a delivery worker performing an essential service and operate from that premise before assuming criminal intent.

