

GVP Pantoja Addresses COVID-19 Pandemic



March 12, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As the COVID-19 virus outbreak evolves and expands in the U.S. and across the globe, our industry has been especially vulnerable. It is our business to transport passengers and goods around the world. Unfortunately, this virus uses our workplace to jump from point to point, and that has made some people nervous to use the transportation services we provide.

Last night, President Trump issued travel restrictions from more than two dozen European countries. Air and rail carriers have also cut service to meet the temporary drop in demand for passenger travel. Our daily routine has and, most likely, will continue to be altered until this pandemic is under control. These changes create a natural apprehension for employees. We are in constant discussion with our carriers to ensure our members do not bear the brunt of the economic effects during this period.

Together, we have been through terrorist attacks, bankruptcies and other health-related threats to our industry. Transportation workers have unparalleled resilience, and we only need to compare our collective bargaining agreements today to what they looked like in the aftermath of 9/11 and subsequent industry restructuring as proof of our enduring strength.

Our intent is to continue ongoing negotiations with Southwest and Hawaiian Airlines. Upcoming negotiations with United Airlines are still scheduled to take place. National rail negotiations remain on track, as well as all other scheduled negotiations with IAM-represented carriers. Ratification of the historic American Airlines agreement will take place later this month. The business of the Machinists Union fighting for and protecting our members will continue as it always has.

It is the job of management to ensure we have a healthy industry. It is your union's job to make sure that any temporary impact to a carrier does not result in permanent negative changes for our members. Jointly, union and management have a responsibility to make sure our members, their employees, are safe. The health of the industry cannot come at the expense of you and your family's health.

I urge every IAM member to follow the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for the most effective prevention measures. We will continue to monitor these guidelines and pass on to you as much information as possible.

Please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> for more information. If you have concerns about potential exposure in the workplace, contact your District Lodge General Chair with your concerns.

The COVID-19 virus, according to the most recently available information, does not pose serious health risks to healthy adults and children. The problem with the virus is that it is extremely contagious and dangerous, even potentially life threatening, for people over 50 years old and/or those individuals with underlying health conditions, particularly heart and lung conditions, diabetes, and immune suppressing conditions. Please be safe and use common sense at work and at home so we can put this latest threat behind us.

Fraternally yours,

Sito Pantoja, General Vice President