

## IBEW Local 26 Information Regarding Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic



Brothers and Sisters, Local 26 has taken some serious steps to help protect and provide relief for our Union family over the last couple of days. While the situation is ever changing and each bit of news out of the Nation's Capital is more concerning than the last, it is important that we as a Union have good, reliable information about what our Local has done and is doing during this unprecedented event. In order to disseminate this information Local 26 will be using our web page and our phone app first. The following items have been enacted, please read:

- 1) For the JATC all classes have been canceled for four weeks beginning March 16. This includes All apprenticeship and R-A upgrade classes as well as night time skill improvement electives. Classes are expected to restart beginning April 13, 2020 at the normally scheduled times. This will not affect the graduation date of any apprentice.
- 2) All Apprenticeship aptitude testing and interviews have been postponed until a later date to be determined, this will not affect the selection process or be detrimental to any applicant.
- 3) The Code Seminar has been postponed to a later date to be determined. Any Brother or Sister who registered for the code seminar should check the email they used to sign up with, as all information regarding the changes will be sent via email.
- 4) The Retirement Seminar Scheduled for April 4, 2020 has been canceled. The packet of information will be sent, by mail, to all registrants. It is expected that the October Retirement Seminar will be held as scheduled, each person will need to register again for the October Seminar.
- 5) All new member orientations have been postponed until a later date to be determined. Each person affected by this will be contacted by phone or mail.
- 6) IBEW Local 26 leadership has been in frequent communication with the governmental bodies to ensure that any action taken will not exclude workers in the trade and workers covered by a Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- 7) IBEW Local 26 has been in constant communication with our various contractors to make sure we are kept abreast of current jobsite situations.
- 8) IBEW International and NECA National has entered into an agreement referred to as the National Disease Emergency Response Agreement (NDERA). This agreement provides the contractors with the ability to protect their employees by sending an employee home IF:
  - a. The employee reports having contact with another person who has reasonably believe to have contracted coronavirus or a similar disease
  - b. Has recently returned from a high-risk Country as defined by the CDC
  - c. Presents symptoms associated with the coronavirus as defined by the CDC

This agreement allows for a contractor to temporarily furlough employees assigned to a jobsite that has been restricted by the contractor or appropriate public or private authority. The contractor shall not contest any unemployment claims filed by employees furloughed under this agreement. Additionally, no employee shall be penalized for refusing to be present at a jobsite out of a genuine belief that being present on that jobsite would place them in imminent danger of contracting coronavirus. There are additional instructions that will be posted as soon as we have further information from the International Office. This agreement was entered into at the National level and is binding on all Construction Locals. The International and NECA will meet every thirty days to determine if this agreement has continued utility.

- 9) The leadership of IBEW Local 26 has reached an agreement with the Trustees of the IAP (annuity plan). In order to assist our brothers and sisters who may be unemployed due to job shutdowns, the Trustees have agreed to relax the severance distribution rules for a period of time, with specific conditions.

- i. An Employee who is laid off on or after March 1, 2020 and prior to July 1, 2020 may be eligible for a Thirty-Day Severance/Emergency Economic Hardship Distribution.
  - ii. ~~The laid off Employee must have been available for work with a contributing Employer (i.e., on Local 26's Available to work list) throughout the period beginning with date of layoff and through the date of distribution.~~ **Because of the NDERA, the signed agreement between IBEW and NECA Trustees, the general terms have changed. Further information will be posted when finalized.**
  - iii. Such benefit must be paid as a single lump sum.
  - iv. The amount of distribution may not exceed the *lesser* of
    - 1. (a) 12 forty-hour weeks of wages at the Employee's job classification immediately prior to layoff, or
    - 2. (b) the Employee's account balance at the date of distribution
  - v. A married employee must obtain spousal consent for any such distribution.
  - b. There will be an application process and this information is just the basic framework. Please be aware that if you choose to utilize this option there WILL BE TAX RAMIFICATIONS. This should only be done in the direst of need.
  - c. More information will be posted on this site as it becomes available. As of today, this will become an option on April 1, 2020.
- 10) If you are not yet aware, the Trustees of the EWTF have made TELEDOC available to ALL participants and their families. Please refer to the mailing that was sent to each of you on how to register and the link below. The hospitals are recommending that if you believe you have the Coronavirus that you call first, TELEDOC is a benefit that will help keep you and your family away from the hospitals and doctors offices unless you absolutely need to be there. This not only protects your family from unnecessary exposure it will prevent the doctors and hospitals from being over crowded, so that they may focus on serious ill people.

IBEW Local 26 will be providing updates as needed on our official webpage and app. The office will remain open for regular business, although we may have limited staff or personal distance protocol in place. It is the intention of the Business Manager to make sure that our Sisters and Brothers have the information and access needed to mitigate this crisis. If anything happens that changes that, or prevents us from providing service we will inform everyone as quickly as possible. Below is a list of informational websites that have accurate and timely information regarding the Coronavirus COVID-19 responses by the CDC, MD and VA. If any legislation passes the Congress and is signed into law regarding the national response, we will provide links and summary explanation on this website. If you have the app, please pay attention to your phone. If you have not yet downloaded the app, now may be a good time.

Please Brothers and Sisters, take a moment to ensure that you are doing everything you can to protect yourself and your family. Reach out to any "at risk" neighbors and friends. A simple trip to the store for your elderly next-door neighbor could be dangerous, maybe you can go for them. A call to somebody self-quarantined, can provide the needed distraction to help keep them from panic. Remember, we are stronger than this pandemic and smarter than all the bad information and "gotcha" social media that is spreading faster than the actual virus. Good information, Calm deliberation, and a determined resolve to face this pandemic as a positive force rather than a negative distraction is what we all need right now.

President Thomas Myers IBEW Local 26