



Eric Bunn Sr.
National Secretary-Treasurer

Dr. Everett B. Kelley
National President

Jeremy A. Lannan
NVP for Women & Fair Practices

IMPORTANT: This information should not be downloaded using government equipment, read during duty time or sent to others using government equipment, because it suggests action to be taken in support of or against legislation. Do not use your government email address or government phone in contacting your Member of Congress.

TSA COVID-19 Talking Points

Background:

- AFGE first wrote to TSA Administrator Pekoske in January and asked the agency to aggressively respond to the emerging coronavirus threat.
- The union specifically requested N95 masks for every TSA officer. That request was ignored.
- Our union sent multiple emails to Pekoske and TSA management requesting N95 masks and better protective equipment. We were denied repeatedly in February and early March.
- We had meetings, made phone calls, and sent emails almost daily urging TSA management to provide N95 masks and other protective equipment for our officers.
- Now these dedicated federal employees can serve the public without fear of infecting themselves or passengers.
- Since the pandemic, close to 170 TSOs nationwide have tested positive for COVID-19. Hundreds of other TSOs who came in contact with the infected officers have been forced to self-quarantine.
- TSOs are testing positive for COVID-19 at a rate that is 6 times higher than the general public.
- Because of their jobs, TSA officers are uniquely susceptible to this outbreak.
- They are constantly in close contact with the traveling public, including international passengers entering the country from overseas.

N95 Masks and other PPE:

- TSA has finally listened to our union's demands for increased safety protocols to protect officers and the flying public from COVID-19.
- The agency has updated its policy to allow N95 respirator masks for employees.
- On March 25, TSA emailed all employees notifying them that N95 masks will be provided to all officers who elect to wear them.
- To be eligible, TSA officers must complete a brief N95 Respirator training.





Dr. Everett B. Kelley
National President

Jeremy A. Lannan
NVP for Women & Fair Practices

- As of now about 12,000 of the 46,000 TSOs nationwide have taken the online course required for masks.
- 7,000 TSOs have taken the course for protective eyewear.
- Employees will be issued one respirator per work shift following completion of the training.
- The bulk of the N95 masks are expired, but it is our understanding that all of the expired masks are still usable consistent with recent CDC guidance.
- Some airports have not received the N95 masks. Local management at other airports are not distributing the masks to TSOs.
- The current supply of N95 masks will soon be exhausted. There should be a plan in place when that occurs so there is not a lapse in masks available to TSOs.
- TSA needs to ensure that there are enough N95 masks for every officer who requests one and who completes the training.
- The agency also needs to mandate that local management at all airports follow the personal protective equipment (PPE) policy.
- The agency's initial instructions to TSOs were to follow the basic CDC guidelines, but did not address the fact that TSOs face a heightened risk due to their job responsibilities.
- Surgical masks were first approved before the agency finally approved the N95 respirator masks. Nitrile gloves have always been used by TSOs.
- The agency has advised TSOs to limit contact with passengers as much as possible.
- TSOs at many airports are also cleaning the checkpoints themselves.
- Since listening to our demands, TSA has done a decent job in putting practices in place to keep the workplace safe.

Workplace Improvements for TSOs

- TSA is now offering leave to officers without charging it to their balance.
- The agency initially started providing weather and safety leave for those ordered to quarantine.
- TSA management later expanded it to include 14-days plus 7-day extensions of weather and safety leave for anyone who self-identifies as being part of a higher-risk category (older people, pregnant women, people with illnesses and other health concerns, etc.)





Dr. Everett B. Kelley
National President

Jeremy A. Lannan
NVP for Women & Fair Practices

- Most recently, the agency has added 24 duty hours for anyone regardless of risk category to attend to personal issues impacted by the COVID-19.

Possible Impact on Airlines and Flights

- There has been an increase in cancelled flights, reduced services and amenities, and additional cleaning at airports.
- The cancelled flights and reduced traffic have affected TSA's need for personnel, so many airports are adding a third or more Regular Day Off for employees or are sending them home on weather and safety leave.

General:

- For years, AFGE has called on Congress and TSA to provide TSOs with the fair workplace rights and protections that they have been denied since the agency's creation.
- If TSOs had full workplace rights, our union may have been able to use those additional collective bargaining protections to work with the agency on a solution sooner.
- In February, the House passed a bill to give TSA officers full collective bargaining rights, but a Senate companion bill still does not have enough cosponsors.
- AFGE has been fighting for years to get TSOs the proper workplace protections they deserve.
- TSA officers worked without pay for 35 days during the shutdown. They took an oath to protect the traveling public. They deserve to have full workplace rights and to be protected in return.

