

# Railroads & COVID-19: Keeping Workers Safe While Moving What America Depends On

## Safeguarding Employees

Railroads maintain and routinely review pandemic response plans. Since news of COVID-19's spread in early January 2020, railroads and their Chief Medical Officers have been updating their plans to contain, mitigate and respond to the coronavirus outbreak, pursuant to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations.

## Protecting Employee Health & Well-Being

- ✓ **Providing timely and accurate information** on virus-related news, CDC-recommended workplace social distancing strategies. Other information includes company-specific protection and mitigation efforts.
- ✓ **Limiting possible exposure.** These efforts include screening workers pre-shift where feasible; directing employees to avoid contamination "hot spots;" remote record keeping; avoiding face-to-face briefings where possible; and providing access to railroads' licensed health professionals to answer questions.
- ✓ **Expanding the frequency of cleaning and sanitation.** Railroads use EPA-approved products in accordance with CDC recommendations in maintenance facilities, railroad headquarters, dispatch and operations centers, on locomotives and rail equipment and railroad-operated sleeping facilities and in railroad-operated motor vehicles. Railroads have also requested enhanced cleaning of hotels and motor vehicles used by railroad contractors. Employees have access to sanitizers and wipes.
- ✓ **Expanding benefits.** Railroads are broadening insurance coverage for virus testing and telemedicine. In some cases, they offer paid leave for virus-related absences.
- ✓ **Limiting group settings.** Railroads conduct meetings and briefings via phone or radio. They have postponed training classes and have spread out or isolated work areas. For frontline employees, railroads allow single occupancy hotel accommodations. They have staggered breaks and limited crew members per locomotive and motor vehicle. Railroads have also limited group dining by making to-go options available and, in some cases, providing financial stipends for takeout meals.
- ✓ **Restricting access to mission-critical locations and expanding social distancing.** Only essential staff who must be present to perform their duties are allowed in operations and dispatching centers. Vendors are restricted from railroad property. Individual employees are limited on where they can be across the network. Railroads have activated secondary dispatch and operation locations.
- ✓ **Transitioning employees to telework where possible to reduce density.** This includes employees not directly involved in train operations and at headquarters. Railroads have also restricted domestic and international employee air travel. They are selectively allowing personal vehicle use and coordinating with suppliers and vendors to ensure they are also taking proper protections.

North America's freight railroads are safeguarding the health and safety of the rail workforce while maintaining the nation's necessary flow of goods that preserve public health and sustain families.

### Keeping Employees Safe



Expanded sanitization, limited exposure and social distancing



Sharing up-to-date information and procedures while following CDC guidelines



Advocating for vaccine priority for the essential freight rail workforce

### Moving Critical Goods



Fertilizers for crops, grains for feed and food products for stores



Energy products for electricity and oil for heating and gasoline



Manufacturing materials, finished products and chemicals like chlorine-based disinfectants for treating water

## Adhering to CDC Guidelines for COVID-19 Exposure & Quarantining

Railroads are in constant communication with federal, state and local partners on evolving public health developments and containment efforts. Railroads are requiring employees to follow CDC guidance for self-protection; directing sick employees to stay home and seek medical guidance and following CDC and local health departments' recommendations to monitor impacted employees. Railroads are also instructing workers to self-isolate if they have been exposed to someone who tests positive for COVID-19 and to notify their designated railroad contact to identify other railroad employees who may have been exposed. Any affected facility and/or equipment is cleaned following approved CDC cleaning and decontamination protocols. Railroads are modifying their responses as the pandemic evolves.

## Advocating for Vaccine Priority

Our nation's ability to overcome the adversity stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic depends, in part, upon the resilience and integrity of our transportation networks. The rail industry ensures the sustained efficiency of supply chains, delivering the commodities and transporting the workers that protect and further the health, safety, and well-being of Americans in their daily lives. As state and local authorities formulate their vaccine distribution strategies, they should acknowledge the rail industry's crucial role in keeping supply chains and the economy functioning throughout the pandemic and provide its essential workforce with access to COVID-19 vaccines, consistent with CDC prioritization.

## Keeping Critical Goods Moving

Freight railroads and their dedicated workforce continue to maintain the flow of goods necessary to preserve public health and sustain families. In fact, America's freight railroads play a critical role in nearly every industrial, wholesale, retail and resource-based sector of our economy. For example, railroads typically originate roughly 60,000 carloads of food and agricultural products per week. Additionally, a lot of the products sold at retail providers such as Target or Walmart get there with the help of rail intermodal. Some of the critical goods railroads and their workers are moving as the nation confronts the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- ✓ Chemicals required for medicines and food packaging; chlorine-based disinfectants for treating water and energy products for generating electricity
- ✓ Fertilizer for growing crops; food products from orange juice to frozen vegetables; corn and other grains for animal feed; and wheat used by bakeries to make bread/pasta that are increasingly in need
- ✓ Municipal waste; oil for heating and gasoline; ecommerce deliveries and retail products that end up on store shelves, such as toilet paper and cleaning supplies

Taken together, it is clear why railroads are considered critical infrastructure by the federal government and are called upon to operate continuously to help ensure human health, safety and economic security. It is during times like these we are especially grateful for the roughly 135,000 employees keeping the rail network running. Our diverse and skilled employees are dedicated to ensuring railroads remain a critical link to American businesses and society.