

This resource is compiled by the COVID19/Coronavirus Mutual Aid Solidarity Network, which you can follow on IG at @COVID19MutualAid_SeattleKC. Message us on IG if you have resources you'd like to share with a broader public. The sample letter is written and shared with permission by Chan Boswell.

Employer Recommendations for Supporting and Protecting Frontline Workers

Please use and adapt this letter for your own purposes if you find yourself facing unworkable circumstances at your job during the current Coronavirus outbreak. We know that a lot of the public health recommendations to work from home are insufficient to protect blue collar workers and people who will be hit harder if they contract Coronavirus. We think people should work from home or stay home if that is a viable option. And, we know we need to make resources available to our community members who don't have this privilege.

Employers should be responsible for protecting and supporting their workers (especially blue collar workers who are often ignored during public health crises). Doing so has the added benefit of protecting people that workers come into contact with, such as residents in low-income housing buildings, or people who are transit-dependent and rely on the bus to get where they need to go. Due to health conditions, age, and other factors that put people at greater risk of harm if they contract Coronavirus, we believe employers should offer the following:

- Job specific recommendations to workers that will help mitigate the risk of getting Coronavirus. It is not enough to say people should work from home because that is not an option for the majority of working class people.
- Proactive options (including paid leave) for people who are themselves at risk, or who care for people who are at risk.
- Paid leave if an employee contracts Coronavirus.
- A plan of action if Coronavirus starts spreading amongst workers or people who workers come into contact with.
- Job appropriate protective equipment and appropriate precautions that reduce workloads to the minimum necessary to continue operations.
- Proactive education about how to minimize the risk of contracting Coronavirus.

We also know that many employers are underprepared to show up for all workers -- and in some cases, they just don't care or will only do the bare minimum to uphold labor laws. Below is



a template letter you can use and adapt for your own purposes. In the event your job is not unionized, but you work with other people who share your concerns--you will potentially face fewer repercussions for speaking up if you work with other people to raise concerns / advocate for more protections and support.

Sample Letter to Employer from Frontline Worker Regarding Coronavirus*

**This sample letter is written and shared with permission by Chan Boswell.*

Hello Trina and Keith,

I'm writing to discuss the implementation of the preparation phase as it pertains to myself and others. I'll be tracking and forwarding this conversation to our union rep.

I've felt a bit squeamish to be entering our shop space, our buildings, and tenants rooms. As the health climate has become more dire, and the risk of an outbreak at Plymouth becomes higher, I find myself questioning Plymouth's priorities around the health and well-being of property management staff.

I should preface the following incident with information of my physical limitations. I suffer from two chronic health conditions: acute asthma and a heart condition known as Atrial Fibrillation. Both of these conditions are ones I manage with lifestyle and medication but, unfortunately, attacks are inevitable. I don't talk about them a ton as a marginalized person in a male dominated and able-bodied field but these conditions do have an impact on my everyday life. They force my body to slow down. They demand careful attention and adherence to strict self care practice and the afib requires I take time off to ensure I don't worsen or complicate my condition which can lead to stroke or cardiac arrest.

Yesterday I was contacted by Smitty to meet at Western Safety at 1pm. When I arrived, we were given industrial grade respiration masks. I was given one and told to put it on. Upon putting it on, the fit felt good. We were then told to cover the nozzles where the cartridges connect and to inhale. As I did this my heart began to palpitate. I took off the mask and was told by the fit test administrator to put it back on. When I told him I couldn't breathe he said I could be the first one to complete the test. As I was testing I felt more fluttering but primarily a pounding sensation in my chest.

I informed Keith who informed me to return the mask to Smitty and to give me goggles and paper respirators. I had already been discussing a possible leave of absence as these conditions put me at a higher risk and when I informed Keith of this he said to follow this protocol until he has paperwork on his desk. I've contacted my doctor for a note of absence as well as HR to see what rights I have. I haven't heard back about my options yet.

Until my options are disclosed to me, I won't be at work. You can regard this as a refusal to work and honestly I am prioritizing my health and safety over anything else. The way I see it, self advocacy is my best option.

Also I just want to give you all a few things to consider moving forward with the preparation phase and front line staff:

— if there is a requirement to work, there should be fair compensation for it. Think hazard pay or something along those lines

— the vulnerability of tenants will increase in transient positions like maintenance and tenant support aids. You're actually multiplying the risks of an outbreak having folks roaming from building to building.

— work orders should be limited to those that are of the highest priority.

— I am not the only staff who is high risk due to health or age. Considerations for these folks need to be discussed.

Thanks for reading

My best,

Chan
They/them