



July 10, 2020

## **MESSAGE FROM MARITIME LABOR**

It has become increasingly apparent the COVID-19 crisis is not going away anytime soon. Our members aboard ships in distant waters as well as aboard vessels of all types in inland waters remain in grave danger and the global supply chain is at risk.

Despite continuous appeals for meaningful assistance from both maritime labor and U.S. flag vessel operators, the federal government has not mandated enforceable standards of shipboard health and safe operations. Further, our advocacy for a consistent, reliable, and rapid testing regimen for mariners remains without definitive support. As the supply chain and military security of the country are becoming increasingly at risk, we have demanded a more active role of government in support of mariners.

Each shipowner/operator has established its own diverging policies and protocol, and they vary greatly from employer to employer, even from ship to ship depending on shipboard culture. In the absence of uniform and government enforced protocol during vessel in-port time with such critical evolutions as cargo operations, vendor/contractor access and shipyard repairs remain essentially unregulated and haphazard. This is an unacceptable situation that is beyond the control of ship's personnel.

However, as always, the burden on maintaining safety at sea remains in large part with the licensed and unlicensed personnel aboard ship. While every member of a crew recognizes his or her duty to their shipmates, employers and government must share ship safety responsibility through consistent policies and regulations. Health and safety aboard ship is a joint endeavor and should not be placed on the shoulders of mariners alone.

To do our part, we the undersigned urge our Members to take every precaution against the Coronavirus as recommended by company protocol and by such CDC guidelines that are applicable. Masks, social distancing, hand and respiratory hygiene, cleaning and sanitizing must all become routine and strictly maintained, whether aboard ship, in transit to or from a ship, in a hiring hall or at home in preparation for shipping out.

As your representatives, we are working together and using every advantage to both protect your health and safeguard your rights. With infection rates spiking again we must protect our lives and our livelihoods with renewed vigilance and discipline. Employers may intervene with reasonable or ineffective workplace policy; either way we will let them know that our contract rights remain in place. We understand the stress and anxiety of working in persistent and intensified danger and so we support common sense safety practices ashore and at sea. Your dedication, professionalism and



perseverance is recognized, and your efforts are best honored by ensuring your own safety and that of others you encounter onboard ship, in your travels, at home or otherwise. Please continue to notify your Union if you have concerns regarding potential or actual COVID-19 exposure or the safety of your vessel.

Wishing all health, safety, and fraternity,

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