**The uncertainty surrounding the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been deeply unsettling to nearly every industry, and the IBEW and its partners at the National Electrical Contractors Association have signed an emergency agreement to help construction workers and contractors navigate these turbulent times.**

Effective March 16, the NECA/IBEW National Disease Emergency Response Agreement provides for the following:

* + If an employee:
    - Reports having contact with another person(s) who has reasonably believed to have contracted coronavirus or a similar disease
    - Has recently returned from a “High-Risk Country” as defined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC); or
    - Presents symptoms associated with the coronavirus or similar disease as defined by the CDC;

The employer shall be permitted to remove the employee from the jobsite and require the employee to obtain a doctor’s release certifying the employee is able to return to work;

* + If an employee is confirmed to have coronavirus or similar disease, the employer shall notify all employees who were believed to be in contact with this individual and take actions consistent with appropriate protocols to prevent the further spread of the disease;
  + If an employee reasonably believes another employee(s) has met one or more of the above conditions, the employee shall report such as soon as reasonably possible. The employer shall then follow all appropriate guidance and protocols to ensure a safe jobsite;
  + There shall be no adverse action taken against an employee who refuses to be present at a jobsite so long as the employee believes there is imminent danger and a reasonable person would agree there is real danger of contracting coronavirus at the jobsite;
  + There shall be no adverse action taken against an employee who has been quarantined, or advised to self-quarantine, due to possible exposure to coronavirus;
  + In the event access to a jobsite is restricted or denied by the employer or other appropriate public or private authority in response to the coronavirus or similar disease, the employer shall be permitted to temporarily furlough the employees assigned to this jobsite;
  + The employer shall not contest any unemployment claims filed by employees temporarily furloughed as a result of a restricted or closed jobsite due to the coronavirus or similar disease, or who have refused to be present at the jobsite out of a genuine belief that being present would place them in imminent danger of contracting coronavirus, or who have been quarantined, or advised to self-quarantine, due to possible exposure to coronavirus; and
  + Such employees shall be permitted to return to their original positions with their employer upon the resumption of work on the jobsite, and/or their ability to return, without the need of the referral process, and irrespective of whether such employees have signed their local union’s out-of-work list.

“We understand the anxiety and uncertainty all of our members and contractors are feeling right now, and we hope this agreement provides a measure of stability as we face this new reality,” said International President Lonnie R. Stephenson.

“Beating any public health emergency like COVID-19 requires all of us to make sacrifices, but being a part of a union means we make these tough decisions with our employers and don’t have them forced on us,” he said. “We’ll reevaluate this agreement every 30 days and keep you updated as we move forward.

“In the meantime, follow CDC guidelines, take your safety and the safety of your families and co-workers seriously, and know that we will get through this and come out stronger on the other side.”

*The National Disease Emergency Reponse Agreement applies to U.S. construction locals and firms who have signed a Letter of Assent to be bound to a construction agreement between any chapter of NECA and any local union of the IBEW.*

*IBEW members in Canada should continue to follow guidance from their local unions and provincial governments.*