

Pandemics, Global charter of demands: Keep public transport workers safe from Covid-19

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Public transport workers are on the frontline of the battle against the Covid-19 pandemic. They are the drivers, ticket sellers, conductors, cleaners, maintenance and office workers who provide the vital services that keep public transport systems functioning - facilitating other key workers to travel to work and ensuring that the sick are cared for and shelves are stocked.

Over 150 workers across the world have died from Covid-19 with the confirmed death toll rising daily. Thousands more are currently infected with the disease. Inadequate health and safety standards have exacerbated the risk public transport workers face while doing their critical jobs through this crisis.

For public transport workers, as with all key workers who are expected to continue to work, their much heightened risk of exposure makes this an occupational health and safety issue. This leads to an increased duty of care as enshrined in international law. Some countries have already recognised Covid-19 as an occupational disease with workers being eligible for compensation payments.

Public transport workers must be adequately protected to enable them to carry out their critical work. No worker should have to take excessive risk or die on the job. In line with previous statements, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) calls for public transport workers to immediately have:

1. Adequate and appropriate personal protective equipment

- including gloves, masks, hand sanitiser and/or water and soap suitable to offer protection from aerosols and any skin contact with appropriate laundry arrangements for work uniforms to eliminate the chances of contamination
- with the necessary training in its safe use and disposal at no cost to the worker

2. Working conditions that minimise transmission and facilitate social distancing, including

- easy access to regular and free Covid-19 testing
- strict and regular cleaning and sanitation procedures in vehicles, dormitories and workplaces, including ticket offices and depots
- non-collection of fares, cashless payments, non-inspection of tickets, rear-door entry and/or closing of drivers' doors (except for passengers with disabilities), perspex screens, blocking of front row

seats, limiting passengers per vehicle, prioritising essential workers, provision of masks for passengers, debt moratoriums and removal of revenue targets

- safe commuting measures for public transport workers while mobility restrictions are in place
 - appropriate sanitation facilities and extra breaks as there are fewer public toilets and washing facilities and social distancing makes access slower
- the right to withdraw from a work situation that presents an imminent and serious danger to their life or health, without fear of retaliation

3. Access to health measures that protect the vulnerable and sick, including

- adequate wage and job protections for workers who should self-isolate due to identified high risks for themselves and/or their households, including underlying health conditions and pregnancy
- comprehensive continuous healthcare coverage including access to mental health support
- sufficient paid leave and financial compensation for workers affected by Covid-19 either directly or indirectly (for example infection, isolation or childcare obligations)

4. Recognition of the key role of public transport workers, including

- increased pay or income
- line of duty/enhanced compensation and benefits in the event of death, including pension payments

5. Regular information and reporting on workplace risks and workforce health, including

- swift provision of information and adequate training on employers' Covid-19 response measures to identified risks, exposure patterns and resulting health impacts
- self-isolation, infection and death rates, broken down by markers including gender, ethnicity, race and job type to ensure any inequalities and vulnerabilities can be investigated and responded to
- complaint mechanisms, with whistle-blower immunity, that allow workers to report risks, anonymously if preferred, without fear of repercussion

6. Trade union rights, including

- consultation and participation in the design of work practices, processes and all health and safety measures
- measures to facilitate the representation of workers both in the workplace and remotely, where workers are mobile or in isolation

These measures must apply to public transport workers regardless of their job description, contractual arrangement and employment status and be responsive to different genders and migration statuses.

The International Transport Workers' Federation also supports the call for the global garment industry to protect workers' income, health and employment for those workers producing personal protective equipment, in line with the principles of this charter.

ORGANISATIONS ENDORSING THE ITF CHARTER OF DEMANDS

Collegium Ramazzini

National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (National COSH), United States

UK National Hazards Campaign, United Kingdom

Centre for Public Health and Environmental Development, Nepal

Scottish Hazards Campaign, Scotland

Occupational Health and Safety Centre, Mumbai

P.S.

- <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/news/keep-public-transport-workers-safe-covid-19>