



## *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen*

### **Division 42**

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Mr Steven Bybee  
Union Pacific Railroad  
1000 West 4th Street  
North Little Rock, AR 72114

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Dear Mr Bybee,

With the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly spreading across the United States, many operating personnel are concerned for their health. With irregular hours, inability to have set sleep patterns, and the normal stress of our jobs, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is difficult. Combine that with the fact that we are in the middle of flu and cold season and many people's resistance to illness will be lower than other times of the year.

While Union Pacific has posted several articles referencing the Company's response to this potentially serious health issue, your train crews are not seeing much of a response about protecting their work environment – specifically the locomotive cabs we work in. Those of us who work in the locomotive cabs can tell you that cab cleanliness and sanitation was poor prior to this outbreak. As one person told me recently a locomotive cab is like a large traveling petri dish. Cuts to Mechanical forces has made cab sanitation even worse than it was before and increases the risk to your employees. These units travel the nation constantly and are often in or passing through noted COVID-19 hot spots like Washington and California, as well as places with growing infection counts. As these trains pass through these areas, the potential for an infected person, either sick or a carrier, bringing the virus into a locomotive cab increases, as does the potential to spread this to additional train crews across our system who could then infect other employees and the public.

Every day we see news reports of other industries, including other transportation companies, taking additional measures and more thorough cleaning processes to protect their employees and the public. These additional measures are even being done in railcars and aircraft. From what I have seen in the reports from the Company, additional cleaning is being done in fixed facilities and additional hand sanitizers are being installed. This is a prudent response to fixed facilities, but does nothing to stem the potential spread within locomotive cabs that travel into areas with high infection numbers and then proceed to the next station, possibly carrying more than just freight. In the Town Hall video, we were told that locomotives are still only being cleaned at standard service locations.

The video also mentioned that COVID-19 dies quickly on surfaces. This is countered by numerous articles and experts who say they don't have a definite amount of time it can survive on surfaces, with some experts saying that it could survive up to 9 days. The consensus is that it survives

approximately 3 days under many circumstances. Are the locomotives being cleaned and disinfected at service facilities within that time frame? If there is a chance that multiple crews could be on a locomotive and spread the infection between cleanings, it would seem additional steps need to be taken.

Crews wiping down cab surfaces is, at best, a last ditch effort and is no comparison to a thorough, proper cleaning. While our crew packs have alcohol wipes that can be used to disinfect surfaces, these hand wipes are small squares that won't come close to cleaning our cab surfaces, and there are only a few in each crew pack. Before this pandemic it was common to get on a locomotive and every wipe in the crew packs had already been used. Crews are and have been carrying sanitizing wipes, often bought at their own expense, to wipe down the cab surfaces. If a crew is doing multiple dog catches, they can easily use 2-3 wipes per train, depleting a supply of wipes in one shift. There is no way a crew can carry enough wipes or crew packs to adequately clean and disinfect all the surfaces in the cab they may come in contact with during a 10-12 hour tour of duty. We're being told to wash our hands to slow the spread of the disease but when you can't clean every surface and have limited access to hand wash facilities this isn't very effective.

Your crews want to come to work healthy and stay healthy. Healthy employees work more safely, which benefits the Company, the employees and the public. We have serious concerns about cab sanitation overall, but especially in relation to this pandemic, the negative effects it can have on our health and safety, and the additional stress this could have on your employees under the new attendance policy. Per the Town Hall video, 80% of people who are infected don't need medical treatment and just need to stay home for a week or more to prevent the spread. One concern of this pandemic that was mentioned in the Town Hall video is overwhelming the medical facilities. If we're going to the doctor for something that doesn't actually require a doctor's visit or treatment just to get a note, we're adding additional burden to the medical system. With multiple government and public health agencies telling the public to stay home if they're sick, expecting employees to stay at home while at the same time making them fear for their job, making medically unnecessary trips to a doctor while navigating hurdles to try to protect their job is counterproductive to protecting the health of your employees and workplace safety.

Sincerely,

Michael A. McGill  
Legislative Representative, BLET Division 42  
2nd Vice Chairman, BLET Missouri State Legislative Board

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