

NTEU

The National Treasury Employees Union

April 28, 2009

VIA FACSIMILE

Gale D. Rossides
Acting Administrator
Transportation Security Administration
601 12th Street
Arlington, VA 22202-4220

RE: Swine Flu Precautions

Dear Ms. Rossides:

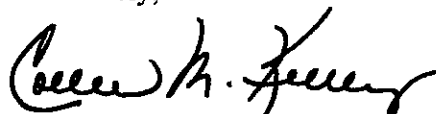
It has been brought to my attention that in least one of the airports where the National Treasury Employees Union represents employees, conflicting instructions have been issued to Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) regarding the use of protective masks to prevent contraction of swine flu. At the Dallas/Fort Worth airport, TSOs were issued masks on Sunday and then told today they were not allowed to wear them unless a traveler exhibited swine flu symptoms. TSOs are clearly not competent to make such medical determinations.

Yesterday, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management issued interim guidance to protect the health of federal employees working in locations where they are likely to come in contact with individuals carrying the swine flu virus. The guidance is based upon recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control. The guidance calls for a distance of six feet to be maintained between an employee and someone who appears ill. The use of an N95 mask is suggested if closer contact than six feet must be maintained. In most airport security settings, it is virtually impossible for all TSOs to maintain six feet of distance from members of the traveling public, including those that appear ill. This is particularly true for those assigned pat-down, wand, and boarding pass checking responsibilities.

I understand the desire not to unduly alarm the traveling public, and I appreciate that this is a fluid situation. But these considerations must be balanced against the need to protect the health of TSOs. Until more is known about the spread and threat to TSOs of swine flu, I ask that TSOs not only have ready access to hand washing facilities, but also that those required to perform functions in closer proximity than six feet to the traveling public be provided the option of wearing protective masks and gloves.

I would be happy to discuss this issue further with you at any time. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Colleen M. Kelley
National President