



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 OUTBREAK AT MISSION FOODS PLANT IN PUEBLO, CO WITH SIX CONFIRMED CASES; WORKERS TOLD PAY TO BE WITHHELD IF THEY STAY HOME AWAITING TEST RESULTS

Mission Foods Did Not Confirm the First Positive Case Until Confronted by UFCW Local 7 on May 21st, After Workers Reported People in Hazmat Suits at the Plant

DENVER – Six workers have been confirmed COVID-19 positive at the Mission Foods plant in Pueblo, Colorado, making the plant Pueblo County’s biggest outbreak location.

On Thursday, May 21st, Local 7 received reports from members, employed by Mission Foods, that people in hazmat suits had been spotted onsite cleaning out lockers. The Union contacted the plant and finally received confirmation there was one confirmed one positive and one awaiting results for COVID-19. Many workers, who had not been told by the company of the confirmed case or possibility of other cases, were concerned for their safety and left the plant to get tested. On Friday, May 22nd, a second positive case was confirmed, and by Monday, May 25th, two more workers tested positive for COVID-19. As of today, Tuesday, June 2, there are a total of six workers with confirmed positives at the Mission Foods plant in Pueblo.

Since the outbreak began, workers at the plant have reported to the Union that Mission Foods notified them they will not be paid if they stayed home waiting for their test results-- an act recommended by health professionals as a way to stop the unintentional spread of the virus. If Mission Foods follows through on its threat to revoke pay to workers taking this safety measure, it would be a direct violation of the Colorado state order [(7 CCR 1103-10 (2020))] requiring employers to provide up to four days of paid leave for workers awaiting their COVID-19 test results.

In response to the six COVID-19 cases and reports from workers of bullying tactics by Mission Foods to continue working at any cost, Kim Cordova, President of UFCW Local 7, issued the following statement:

“Instead of supporting the heroic actions of UFCW Local 7 members who took it upon themselves to get tested for COVID-19 to prevent further infection at the plant, Mission Foods is now attempting to scare them to go back to work before their test results are in, in direct violation of Colorado law. We’ve already seen the devastation and destruction that this virus has caused our members in other communities across Colorado. We won’t standby to watch another tragedy unfold due to recklessness and negligence.”

“Like all Americans, our members deserve to be safe and protect their and that of their families and coworkers. We call on Mission Foods to stop these scare tactics and pay these workers as state law demands.”

In addition to calling on Mission Foods to rescind their threat of withholding pay to those that are awaiting test results or have doctor’s notes to quarantine, Local 7 released the following list of demands to protect the health of these 200 workers:

1. Mandate Mission Foods to provide the highest level of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) through access to the federal stockpile.
2. Reduce line speeds to allow for the increased distance between workers.
3. Ensure daily testing of workers and their communities.
4. Provide paid sick and family leave.
5. Ensure workers have access to quality and affordable health care, that includes long term hospital coverage.
6. Mandate enforceable federal safety standards.
7. Mandate enforceable strong health CDC guidelines.
8. Ensure constant monitoring by federal inspectors to enforce safety standards.
9. Strengthen whistleblower laws for workers.
10. Protect workers’ health and safety by ensuring they have access to union representation.
11. Provide death benefits to all workers.

Mission Foods is a subsidiary of [Gruma Corporation](#), a Mexican owned tortilla company that sells products under various name brands. The Union represents 200 members at the Mission Foods plant in Pueblo, CO.

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[Local 7](#), the largest private sector union in Colorado is affiliated with United Food and Commercial Workers International Union which represents over 1.3 million workers in the United States and Canada, and is one of the largest private sector Unions in North America. UFCW members work in a wide range of industries, including retail food, food processing, agriculture, retail sales, and health care.

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