

A **54 year old male** employee died due to exposure to the **COVID-19** virus as a result of working as a mailroom supervisor at a correctional facility.

The employee started working as a Mail Room Supervisor at Hardeman County Correctional Facility on January 13, 2020. He directed mail room operations within the facility and collected mail from the post office and inmates as well as distributed mail to inmates and other employees within the facility. Employee and employer interviews revealed that most employees and inmates within the facility would come into contact with the victim, since he would travel all over the facility to pick up and deliver mail.

Documentation showing that a total of 23 employees had contracted COVID-19, 45 days prior to the victim contracting the virus was provided. Also submitted was documentation that indicated a total of 108 inmates had tested positive for COVID-19 in the 45 days leading up to the victim's passing. Analysis of the victim's and 23 other timecards showed that he could have come into contact with employees who had contracted COVID-19 on the following dates: 09/08/2020, 09/03/2020, 09/02/2020, 09/01/2020, 08/31/2020, 08/29/2020, 08/28/2020, 08/27/2020, 08/25/2020, 08/24/2020, 08/21/2020, 08/19/2020, 08/17/2020, and 08/15/2020.

The victim's last day of work was on September 9, 2020. He started experiencing COVID-19 symptoms on September 10, 2020, so he called in sick. On September 8, 2020, prior to him experiencing symptoms, the facility had conducted mass COVID-19 testing of all employees and inmates within the facility. On September 12, 2020, the results of the mass testing came back, and the victim's test was positive. Subsequently, he was admitted to Jackson-Madison County General Hospital on September 14, 2020. The victim's next of kin contacted the facility during the afternoon of September 30, 2020 to inform them of his passing.

At the start of the pandemic, the employer supplied disposable cloth face masks, nitrile gloves, and Purell hand sanitizer to all employees working within the facility. Six (6) feet social distancing was enforced through email memorandums, signage within the facility, and markings on the floor. For employees working at checkpoints and within COVID-19 positive pods, the employer provided face shields, N95 face masks, disposable gowns, nitrile gloves, and shoe covers. The employer also supplied EPA registered disinfectants to be used by employees to disinfect the facility housekeeping plan for employees and inmates to follow for cleaning and disinfecting the facility.

Interviews with employees, photos provided by the company, and internal company communications reveal that the company followed the CDC guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Citation(s) as Originally Issued

A complete inspection was conducted at the accident scene. Some of the items cited may not directly relate to the fatality.

Citation 1 Item 1

Type of Violation: Other-than-Serious \$4,000

TDLWD Rule 0800-01-03-.05(1)(a)1: Within eight (8) hours after the death of any employee as a result of a work related incident, the employer did not report the fatality to the TOSHA Division of the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development:

The employer did not report the death of an employee who died on 9/30/2020 until the afternoon of 10/1/2020 due to a COVID-19 infection that was contracted in the workplace.