

CURRENTS

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Shipbuilders should maintain social distance when possible.

and provide waterfront support services, such as some employees who work in waterfront engineering, production control, the clinic, and construction project and inspection departments.

Because more than 70% of employees work on first shift, transitioning to two eight-hour shifts will balance the number of employees working at a time, enhancing social distancing efforts. The period between shifts will be used to clean high-traffic and high touch-point areas across the shipyard, meaning facilities will be cleaned twice every 24 hours while there are minimal personnel on site. Employees will be responsible for cleaning their personal work areas at the beginning and end of both shifts.

The shift change, as well as the extension of liberal leave, comes as a result of recommendations made by the company's COVID-19 Crisis Action Group, which is comprised of leaders from across the shipyard who are focused on staffing and resolving safety concerns. These measures are intended to further reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19, given recent research that suggests social distancing practices in Virginia and North Carolina are slowing down the spread of the respiratory illness. To minimize risk and slow the spread of the virus, NNS also is providing flexible work options, including telework.

Given the anticipated prolonged nature of this pandemic, NNS will continue to monitor and adjust business operations as needed to maximize social distancing and keep the working environment safe while progressing mission-essential work.

Visit nns.huntingtoningalls.com/411 for the latest updates on NNS' COVID-19 response.

NNS Announces New Shifts

Newport News Shipbuilding is moving to a new work schedule beginning Monday, May 4, in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the company is extending liberal leave until Monday, May 18.

“My commitment to remain open while offering liberal leave allows every employee to make the decision that least impacts them and their families,” NNS President **Jennifer Boykin** wrote in a letter to employees. “For those employees who are coming to work, we will transition from three to two, more balanced, eight-hour shifts to reduce close personal contact and keep employees and their families safe while ensuring continuity of critical operations.”

The new standard shifts will be 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 2:30 a.m., and will primarily involve production workers and other employees who directly support production

Deckplate Responds to COVID-19

Many shipbuilders have grown accustomed to working in close quarters. For many, it's just a part of the job. Now, they are faced with a new challenge – keeping a safe distance.

When Newport News Shipbuilding was confronted with the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of social distancing, company leaders had to make adjustments quickly – especially for employees who work on the deckplate.

“Social distancing has challenged us to rethink how we assign and sequence work and even how and where we sit down to eat,” said **Joe Robertson**, trades manager for New Construction Aircraft Carrier

Programs, adding that teams are working diligently to take every precaution known like handwashing and sanitizing work areas and equipment and wearing face masks in permitted work conditions.

Robertson said everyone is intentional about practicing every new behavior, and he is confident it will become second nature over time. “We are getting better every day and still have a ways to go,” he said. “Teams are understandably anxious about their health and the safety of their friends and loved ones. We just have to stay focused on what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends and trust we will get the right results.”

Deckplate Responds to COVID-19

CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Blaster **Christopher Copeland** (X33D) says the vibe in the yard is guarded, and everyone seems to take the threat of the virus more seriously.

“I didn’t think the virus was going to be a big deal. I’m definitely more cautious. It’s hard, but we have to do it,” he said.

COVID-19 safety response posters and ground clings have been installed throughout the yard to remind shipbuilders to maintain social distancing and other tips to stay safe.

Electrician **Brant Requizo** (X31) said employees are keeping their distance. “We don’t high-five or fist-bump right now. It’s more like a boot kick at best,” he said jokingly.

Robertson believes there is a positive takeaway from the pandemic. “In times of crisis you get to know your teammates in a more personal way. People open up and share their specific circumstances, which allows you to understand concerns from their perspective,” he said. “I think we appreciate each other a little more. That helps us make better decisions as a team.”

HII Family Health Center Updates

The HII Family Health Center is operating under normal hours but instructing patients to call (757) 327-4200 to schedule an appointment before visiting in person. All non-acute in-person appointments are being rescheduled. The onsite CVS pharmacy is also operating under normal business hours. Patients are encouraged to use the drive-thru to pick up prescriptions.

The HII Family Vision Center is open from 2 until 6 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays for safety eyewear services only. For more information, email osconsumersupport@vsp.com or call (757) 327-4188.

The Onsite Dental clinic is offering online appointments. Employees and dependents can connect with Onsite Dental’s board-certified dentists through live video consultations to address dental concerns and treatment options. Patients will need to use a personal smartphone, computer or tablet with internet, audio and camera access. Appointments are available Monday through Thursday. Call (757) 707-7223 to make an appointment.

Benefits Options for Employees Extended

Newport News Shipbuilding has extended benefit options for employees who expect to be out of work for more than five days or 40 hours.

Temporary policies for hourly sickness and accident benefits, salaried short-term disability and hourly annual leave benefits will continue into May. See the Pay and Benefits Guidance document at nns.huntingtoningalls.com/411 for more information.

Shipbuilders Make Masks to Prevent COVID-19

Across Newport News Shipbuilding, employees have taken the initiative to make cloth face coverings for themselves and their co-workers to help slow the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

NNS’ Sail Loft began making thousands of masks when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued guidance recommending the use of cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus. Employees outside of the Sail Loft also began making masks.

Joseph Traynham, an acting general foreman, said his team made about 200 face masks in two days for shipbuilders on all shifts. “We made the face masks using a sewing machine in our shop,” he said. “We’re stepping up to the plate and will continue to make them as people need them.”

Kennon Marsh, a sheet metal mechanic and Master Shipbuilder, recognized the opportunity to help his crew. He distributed cloth face coverings made by his wife, who is a quilter. “When times are at the worst, people should be at their best,” he said. “I’m appreciative of my wife for making these face masks that I could give my co-workers to help them stay safe.”

NNS is purchasing face masks for all employees, but demand is high and supplies are running low across the country. That’s why **Kimberly Gibson**, an organizational development representative, took it upon herself to make homemade face masks for her co-workers.



Shipbuilders like **Roslyn Smith** are using facemasks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“I feel like this is my small contribution to the safety and well-being of my shipbuilding family,” she said. “I feel so proud when I walk into work and see individuals wearing something I was able to make for them. I genuinely care about my shipyard family and I hope they can feel that in a tangible way.”

DO YOU HAVE A HOMEMADE MASK?

Shipbuilders are encouraged to send photos of themselves wearing homemade masks to communications@hii-nns.com or send a photo to NNS President **Jennifer Boykin** via email or her Facebook page. As a reminder, it is important to wear masks correctly for them to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.