There’s no denying it – the novel coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19 – have upended daily life in the U.S. and Canada. When we first wrote about the virus in our March issue, the U.S. had just recorded its first death at a care facility in Washington state. In the few short weeks since, the situation has changed dramatically.

As of March 26th, U.S. cases have topped 69,000, with over 1000 deaths. Over 40 percent of the U.S. population has been asked to stay home. Schools are closed in 46 states and millions of people are under various shelter-in-place and social distancing orders issued by state and local governments. Millions of workers are facing layoffs as restaurants, stores, hotels and many other businesses shut down or cut back available services.

In construction and other industries, employers are doing what they can to keep employees safe and businesses running despite interruptions to the global supply chain. There’s concern among business owners that more major cities will order a halt to non-essential business, and confusion over the definition of what businesses and projects may be deemed “essential.”

“During these uncertain times, it’s important that we do our part to maintain the safety and health of our LIUNA brothers and sisters, our families and everyone in the broader communities where we live and work,” says LIUNA General President Terry O’Sullivan. “We have faced adversity in the past and emerged stronger than ever, and this crisis will be no different if we all band together.”

The mental health impacts facing many of us are real and far-reaching – anxiety caused by fear of the unknown, loneliness caused by a lack of social contact or simply the real-life stresses of an uncertain financial or child care situation. Even though social distancing, quarantine or isolation have forced many of us to be physically apart, we should try to take some comfort in the fact that we are not alone. Our family members, friends and coworkers are going through many of the same struggles. Millions of people across the U.S. and Canada are staying indoors to reduce their risk of spreading the virus to people they have never met. In many ways, stemming the spread of coronavirus is a team effort, one that we’re all in together.

Unfortunately, it looks like the reality is that this pandemic is going to keep affecting our daily lives for more than a couple of weeks. It may be months before our lives get back to something resembling “normal.” Our work schedules, financial situation, child care, doctor’s visits, vacations and other social engagements may all be affected for the foreseeable future. We should all be prepared to continue assessing how closely we choose to interact with others in our day-to-day lives and do what we can to break the chain of transmission.

The Fund is monitoring all aspects of this virus and its impact on LIUNA District Councils, Local Unions, health and welfare funds, signatory contractors and members and their families. We will continue to provide guidance related to these and other areas as this situation continues to evolve.

For more information, visit the Fund’s Coronavirus & COVID-19 Resources page. It contains links to the following:

- The LHSFNA’s Coronavirus & COVID-19 Fact Sheet
- The LHSFNA’s Recommended COVID-19 Response Plan for Construction Employers (available in both English and Spanish)
- COVID-19: Planning for Today and for Tomorrow – includes information on preparation, maintaining your routine and staying flexible in the face of adversity
- Coronavirus and Its Impact on Our Mental Health – includes information on signs of stress and how to approach mental health impacts during a pandemic or other stressful life event
- How to Speak Coronavirus: Know Your Terminology – explains terms that have become common in our everyday lives, such as the difference between quarantine and isolation

If you have specific questions about coronavirus and COVID-19 that aren’t addressed by the materials above, contact the Fund at 202-628-5465 or email lifelines@lhsfna.org.