

Port Authority

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (January 10, 2022) - All 2,600 Port Authority of Allegheny County employees will be required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by March 15 or face discipline up to termination, the public transit agency notified its employee unions on Monday.

The new policy will go into effect on February 1, and is being implemented to promote the health, wellness, and safety of Port Authority's workforce and to protect members of the riding public with whom they interact daily. The Authority joins several transit agencies across the country in requiring its employees to be vaccinated.

The policy, which will not include a testing option in lieu of being vaccinated, comes months after the agency has taken several steps to encourage its workforce to get inoculated, including financial incentives and on-site vaccine clinics. In October, Port Authority began requiring all new employees be vaccinated. To date, 74 percent of Port Authority's employees are vaccinated.

"With the recent surge of the Omicron variant and the proven success of the vaccine against severe illness and death, it became clear to me that a vaccine requirement is the most effective way for us to protect our employees and riders," said Port Authority CEO Katharine Kelleman. "We've already seen what the virus has done to our service, and our riders can't afford to have even more missed trips and delays. This will help ensure our employees remain healthy and protected so they can deliver the safe and reliable public transportation that Allegheny County deserves."

Seven Port Authority employees have died since the start of the pandemic. Four died before the vaccine was widely available; three were not vaccinated.

Employees will be notified directly about the new policy later this month that they will have until March 15 to provide proof of their vaccination status. Employees will be considered fully vaccinated after receiving the first dose of a single-shot vaccine or after the second dose of a two-dose vaccine. Booster shots will be strongly encouraged but are not required. As is required by law, religious and medical exemptions will be considered. Accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Beginning March 16, any employee in violation of the requirement, and who does not meet an exemption and receive accommodation, could face discipline up to termination.

The Authority is working to finalize details with its unions about continuing the financial incentives and paid time off for employees who experience side effects from the vaccine.

More information on Port Authority's efforts to create a safe and healthy environment for employees and riders can be found at <https://portauthority.org/safetogo>.

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