
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL GLS EMPLOYEES
FROM: DAVID GUDGEL, GENERAL MANAGER
SUBJECT: DOES THE COMPANY CARE ABOUT YOU? (EMPLOYEE RISK CONCERNING NLV)
DATE: 6/18/04

Recently, an editorial was posted on the Union website regarding the care the Company has exercised in protecting the driver and wash crew staff from contracting NLV. Many claims were made about the Company's actions, or inactions that put our employees in harm's way without proper notification or protections. I would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight on these accusations and to give you more information about the virus and how it is transmitted.

The containment of NLV is of great importance to GLS and Holland America, as it is with all cruise lines and tour operators. We have taken many costly and time-consuming precautions to ensure passengers can enjoy their vacation and the ships offer the highest standards in public health. Passenger dissatisfaction, poor public image and possible cancelled sailings resulting from the spread of this virus demand that we take these measures.

Our front-line employees are key to limiting the transmission from disembarking passengers to embarking passengers and from one ship to another. Ensuring you are healthy is just as important as making sure our physical assets are properly disinfected.

The article contended that "Many of you were dispatched to retrieve passengers from the Island Princess without knowledge of, or warning from the Company, whom (sic) knew about this condition days before you were dispatched!" The Island Princess is on a Glacier Route, calling on Vancouver, B.C. every 14 days. On the southbound sailing from Whittier, Alaska departing on May 22, one passenger reported NLV-like symptoms. This unconfirmed report was made on May 26 and no further cases were noted. As the virus is contagious for approximately 48 hours, and no cases were noted for the next 72 hours, the ship's arrival on May 29 presented no identifiable risk. On this date we had two southbound coaches.

The Island Princess experienced upwards of 380 cases of NLV on its northbound departure from Vancouver to Whittier, and it is true that the CDC was brought in to assist with the investigation. The virus is believed to have been introduced to the ship by a Canadian Rockies tour group (non GLS). All passengers from this cruise disembarked in Whittier where the ship underwent extensive cleaning. On the subsequent southbound sailing departing Whittier June 5 and arriving Vancouver on June 12, there were 12 reported cases of NLV. On June 12 both of the southbound transfer coaches were farmed and we brought both of them back to the yard for cleaning immediately after dropping passengers at the airport. It is important to note that in this case, as well as all other cases this year, alternate transportation arrangements have been made for all symptomatic passengers. They have not been transported on our coaches.

Concerning the steps we take to clean the coaches, we have three levels of cleaning based on the exposure or risk. When there is no identifiable risk, as was the case on May 29, we employ our normal levels of cleaning. If there were a small number of reported cases that were contained during the cruise, we will often move to Level 1 cleaning procedures. This procedure involves spraying disinfectant on all hard surfaces and wiping them down. Level 2 cleaning is employed on coaches used in service when the cases of NLV have not stabilized on the ship, or when the coach has carried passengers known to be symptomatic. This procedure involves fogging the coach with Virox, wiping down hard surfaces, steam cleaning and disinfecting the A/C evaporator filter and cleaning the restroom.

The letter also indicates that the CDC recommends wearing a mask while cleaning the coach. While masks are available to wash crew employees, it should be noted the CDC recommends wearing a mask for “persons who clean areas substantially contaminated by feces or vomit.” In cases, where someone has gotten ill on your coach, these precautions should certainly be taken.

Following, please find a brief explanation of the virus, its symptoms and ways in which we can protect ourselves and limit the spread of this common ailment.

NLV is common in many areas of the world, including Alaska and Canada, and can be identified by symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and sometimes fever. Only the common cold is reported more frequently. There is no cure and no vaccination and it typically runs its course in 12 to 60 hours.

The single most effective way to protect yourself from the virus is through proper hand washing. It is also important to keep your hands away from your face, especially after making contact with any other person. Finally, efforts should be made to prevent person-to-person contact. If washing facilities are not readily available, the use of an anti-bacterial waterless hand cleaner is advisable. Small bottles of this cleaner are available in dispatch.

Finally, if you or your passengers experience any gastro-intestinal symptoms, it is very important you report them to your supervisor immediately so we may limit the transmission. Please feel free to contact me directly with any further concerns on this issue.