



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Local 1431 – East Orange VA Medical Center



News Release

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East Orange VA Hospital Employees at Risk of COVID-19 as Staff Struggles to Keep Veterans Safe

Washington, D.C. – The National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) Local 1431, representing approximately 760 medical professionals at the East Orange VA Hospital are on the front lines of the [COVID-19 outbreak in East Orange, New Jersey](#). While they remain steadfast in their commitment to caring for our nation’s sick and wounded veterans, especially during this time of crisis, many are concerned for their own health and are fearful that their ability to continue offering care will be compromised.

For the last two weeks, employees at the East Orange VA Hospital have made numerous attempts to communicate with hospital administrators regarding serious Coronavirus-related safety issues only to have their requests ignored or denied.

What are the safety concerns expressed by East Orange VA medical professionals?

“Our nurses, pharmacists, and other medical professionals at the East Orange VA Hospital are united in their concern over the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) like masks, gloves, and sanitization stations,” said the Local’s Executive Board, a group of union leaders speaking on behalf of the employees represented by NFFE Local 1431. “We appreciate that this pandemic presents a unique set of challenges for this VA and hospitals throughout the country, but our members, who are bravely fighting to protect and care for our veterans cannot continue to put their lives at risk without even the most basic safety precautions,” continued the Executive Board.

At the time of this release, the East Orange VA Hospital reported 53 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with another 81 patients under investigation.

Not only are the “mission essential” medical professionals at East Orange VA Hospital left without proper PPE, many have expressed concerns over the lack of proper sanitization throughout the facility and management’s unwillingness to reassign high risk employees, like those aged 60 and over and immunocompromised to posts where they will not come in contact with COVID-19 symptomatic patients.

“If the East Orange VA leadership continues to refuse to listen to and protect its employees, we fear the outcome will be disastrous at this facility and the greater community,” cautioned the Executive Board.

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Established in 1917, the National Federation of Federal Employees is the oldest union representing civil service federal employees. NFFE represents 110,000 federal employees in 35 departments and agencies government-wide. NFFE is affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO.

For more information, go to www.nffe.org.