

COVID-19: A Look Back Over a Year of Change

Mar 19, 2021



It's been one year since the Novel Coronavirus Disease that became known as COVID-19 quickly changed the lives of everyone in our company, as states throughout the country "shut down." Attempting to keep this highly contagious virus at bay, everyone was strongly encouraged to stay at home, but exceptions were made for those providing essential services, including medical staff, first responders, grocery store employees – and our utility workers.

Soon, words like *social distancing*, *quarantine*, *asymptomatic*, *contact tracing*, *flattening the curve* and *being in your bubble* were integrating into our normal daily conversations. There was a run on toilet paper, disinfecting wipes, paper towels and Ramen Noodles. Since crowds were off limits, we took to doing more and more virtually – from work meetings and school classes to visits with family, doctors' appointments and holidays.

At FirstEnergy, nearly half of the company's employees worked from home while the other half continued working in the field but did so amid a number of COVID-19 health and safety measures and protocols. Wearing masks, frequently sanitizing hands and disinfecting surfaces, daily temperature checks, installing physical barriers on cubicle walls, working in pods and maintaining social distance became part of these employees' routine.

Once we got over the initial shock of this massive change in our daily lives, we started questioning if this was "the new normal." Fortunately, a year later, we are now talking more about vaccinations instead of self-isolation. And while we are not yet back to the way things were pre-COVID-19, it is beginning to feel like we are getting closer to putting this behind us – and looking at how we can incorporate new and beneficial ways of working into our future.

But with so many changes, it's good to look back at all the ways the company evolved along with the situation, always keeping the health and safety of employees first.

Our compensation and benefits philosophy throughout the pandemic has been "no financial harm" to our employees. In line with this, FirstEnergy has provided:

Enhanced Workplace Flexibility

- Includes all employees who can work from home continuing to do so until at least June 1, 2021
- Enhanced flexibility encouraged, even for those employees unable to work from home

Implemented CV19 Time Code

- Full pay time code used for any absence with COVID-19-related symptoms (even after a negative COVID-19 test) to encourage sick employees to stay at home when feeling ill
- This code is also used to support employees who have family care needs due to COVID-19 and enhanced workplace flexibility is not an option
- We are offering up to four hours of CV19 for each dose of the COVID-19 vaccine if received during normal work hours.

CARES Act Change Implemented for the 401k

- Participants in the 401(k) Savings Plan were able to request up to a maximum of \$100,000 in distributions by Dec. 31, 2020 if the eligibility criteria was met
- Participants in the 401(k) Savings Plan were able to defer existing loan payments until Dec. 31, 2020. Any deferred loans were returned to payment status in January 2021.

Anthem Health Plan Changes – currently in place through the end of March 2021

- Treatment for COVID-19: Treatment after being diagnosed for COVID-19 is covered with no member cost sharing when using an in-network provider
- Telehealth Coverage: Cost sharing is waived for all in-network covered services appropriate for telehealth

Quote from Steve Strah, President and CEO

"The strength, commitment and resiliency shown by our employees since the very start of the COVID-19 pandemic in our country has been nothing less than inspiring. We not only continued our operations as an essential business during this global health emergency, but we did it safely and at a high level of performance that we should all be proud of.

While this past year has been extremely difficult on everyone, I think we can also recognize how the changes we experienced forced us as a company to swiftly transition into new ways of working together, serving our customers, helping our communities and keeping each other safe. We evolved at a pace no one could have expected, while at the same time keeping our employees' needs first.

Thank you to everyone who has been working longer and harder than ever before, to those who continue adapting to onsite safety protocols, and to those who are balancing working from home while also caring for children, elderly or others in the household. Your efforts are sincerely appreciated.

The pandemic is not over, but I hope we are now seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. As we navigate the weeks and months ahead, please continue to look out for yourselves and for the health and safety of those around you. Thank you."

Paid Time Off / Vacation Enhanced Carryover

- 2020 PTO/vacation remaining at the end of 2020, beyond any typical carryover permitted, was added to a deferred COVID-19 time off quota. Employees have until Dec. 31, 2023, to use this additional time off.

Short-Term Incentive Program (STIP) 2020 Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Exceptions

- For employees below Executive Council, the Compensation Committee of the Board of Directors approved KPI exceptions that positively impacted the STIP payouts employees received in February of this year. These exceptions were due to unique circumstances, which included impacts due to COVID-19.

Other important measures taken

- We implemented additional safety protocols, increased cleaning protocols of our offices, established social distancing procedures, provided masks and other cleaning supplies and upgraded HVAC systems of our FE-owned buildings to ensure the offices are safe for the employees who need to be on site and in anticipation of our remote employees returning to their offices.
- We developed a robust COVID-19 Medical Screening Process or "Hotline." A medical staff consisting of 14 nurses and doctors and many non-medical intake teams were assembled to manage COVID-19-related illnesses, perform contact tracing and safely return employees to work.
- We implemented a COVID-19 medical illness and return-from-travel intake application (Safe Workplace). We formed a Chronic Condition Return team (CCRT) which developed protocols for employees with chronic conditions to manage their return to work or approval to use paid time off hours during the health emergency.
- We quickly began working remotely wherever possible and upgraded our Teams and other IT systems to support this change so we could continue to operate safely and effectively.
- We created a Return to Work team, that developed, implemented and continues to update FirstEnergy's Workplace Return Guide covering all policies and protocols for onsite employees to follow and remote employees to adopt once employees return to the workplace following the current public health crisis. This team continues to evaluate the evolving situation and recommends a Workplace Return Date to leadership.
- We offered voluntary COVID-19 testing to employees returning home from mutual assistance storm restoration work.
- Procured 600 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for employees who live and work in WV and established a vaccination site at our Fairmont, WV location.

Recognizing employees we lost

We lost three of our coworkers due to COVID-19. To commemorate each of them, the FirstEnergy Foundation made a \$2,500 donation in that person's name to the 501c3 organization chosen by their family.

- **Exar "Ponch" Ruiz**



- **Derrick Spivey**



- **Bill Gavalek**



COVID-19 by the Numbers*

- 1,143 employees who reported with positive test results
- 3 employee fatalities due to COVID-19:
 - Exar "Ponch" Ruiz
 - Derrick Spivey
 - Bill Gavalek
- 40 contractor employees who reported with positive test results are supervised by FirstEnergy (i.e., Call Center employees)
- 363,800 COVID-19 hours charged
- 8,200 calls into FirstEnergy's COVID-19 hotline
- 1.5 million masks purchased
- 1.4 million pairs of gloves purchased
- 200,000 packs of disinfectant wipes purchased
- 80,000 bottles of sanitizer purchased
- 45,000 COVID-19 test kits purchased
- 13,000 thermometers purchased

**As of March 16, 2021*