



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Local 2109 – Watervliet Arsenal



News Release

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Watervliet Arsenal Employees Demand Greater Measures to Keep Workers Safe During Coronavirus Outbreak

Washington, D.C. – Today, the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) Local 2109, representing approximately 650 employees at Watervliet Arsenal in Watervliet, New York, is sounding the alarm on numerous unaddressed Coronavirus-related safety issues that Arsenal employees fear put themselves and the Albany area at risk.

Watervliet Arsenal, which is known for manufacturing large caliber cannons and other Defense manufacturing, has been slow to address the numerous safety concerns brought forth by workers in recent weeks. This has been particularly concerning to Arsenal employees because (at the time of this release) three Watervliet Arsenal employees have already tested positive for COVID-19. As the novel Coronavirus outbreak has increased in its scope, particularly in the state of New York, Watervliet Arsenal has failed to deliver on the most basic measures to protect workers, many of whom have been deemed “mission essential” and must report to work.

“The bottom line is Watervliet Arsenal workers do not feel safe at the worksite,” said the Local’s Executive Board, a group of union leaders speaking on behalf of the employees represented by NFFE Local 2109. “We understand that Coronavirus is a unique kind of threat, but the workers here feel extremely vulnerable because even the most basic safety precautions are not being taken. We have been raising these concerns and they go unaddressed day after day. Enough is enough, we need a safe work environment or it could be devastating for Watervliet Arsenal workers and the entire community.”

What are the safety concerns expressed by Watervliet Arsenal employees?

“There is a major shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) like gloves and face masks. The Arsenal is having to ration this equipment because there is not enough of it to meet the need. It is a major problem,” continued the Union Executive Board. “But other things are even more concerning. Shared tools are not being sanitized between uses. Sanitation stations run out of supplies, then are not replenished for long periods of time. Some of the bathrooms do not even have soap. These are truly unacceptable working conditions during a pandemic outbreak. Watervliet Arsenal needs to get these problems fixed immediately. If not, I fear COVID-19 is going to be all over this Arsenal. Nobody wants to see that happen.”

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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, including workers at Watervliet Arsenal. NFFE is affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO.