

**No: 140/2024**

**19 April 2024**

**Our Ref: C1/24**

**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

## **Introduction of 'Correx' York Container Sleeves - Serious Health, Safety & Ergonomic Concerns and Safety Management Failures:**

This is an update for Branches, Safety Reps and members on the decision of Royal Mail senior Operational Directors and Management team to roll out nationally and universally across all operations - automation and manual functions, York Container white plastic Correx Sleeves (or liners) and to withdraw from service and scrap all red Auto-Levelling Parcel/Packet (ALP) sleeves.

Without any proper trials, proof of concept or meaningful consultation with the Union, senior Operational Management introduced the white plastic 'Correx' York Container Sleeves into the automation operation and the manual sortation operation.

Against strong health, safety and ergonomic objections from the CWU Health, Safety and Environment Department, Royal Mail have continued to persevere with 'Correx' sleeves despite;

- Firstly, the 'Short and Long Term safety and wellbeing risks to the workforce.
- Secondly, ignoring the frail, fragile, poor quality of the 'Correx' material and its inability to withstand the arduous use requirements of equipment in the Royal Mail network with thousands being damaged and going out of service every week, broken up, smashed, split, punctured etc., with many continuing in use in a poor hazardous condition with local hap-hazard and botched repairs. The material breaks up and tears easily.
- Thirdly, apart from the musculoskeletal, manual handling risks of injury whilst manually sorting from the 'Correx' sleeves, the risks of 'cumulative' long-term musculoskeletal and back ill-health is a serious concern.

- Finally, cuts, and abrasions caused by damaged, sharp, jagged, split edges of the 'Correx' has become an additional problem with mounting numbers of accidents to the workforce and recently a customer was injured this way.

We have made it clear to Royal Mail that the Safe System of Work is not fit for purpose and the so-called solution of providing 'shovels' to staff to unload 'Correx' sleeves is totally impractical and seen by the workforce as no more than a 'joke'.

This week on 15 April Royal Mail announced in an 'Ops Update' circular signed off by the Head of Assets, the withdrawal from service of the remaining 250,000 ALP Sleeves to be 'scrapped' and recycled (but no information on how or what they are being recycled in to)! These ALP Sleeves at £40 each equates to £10 million being discarded and thrown away. (A copy of the circular is attached).

The Red Mk2A ALP Sleeves were jointly developed over many years with the involvement of Royal Mail Assets, the Royal Mail Ergonomist, CWU Health, Safety and Environment Department, 'Jacon' Sleeve Manufacturers and 'Hartwall' York Container Manufacturers. The result was an 'Optimum' performing Sleeve that was operationally tested, ergonomically safe for use in the manual operation and has been a great success. Having achieved that outcome which is a credit to all concerned the Red Alps are now being ditched as Royal Mail moves from its "Safety No1 Mantra" to a new era in which Royal Mail puts performance, efficiency and profit before the safety and health of the workers.

Following the decision of Royal Mail, meetings have taken place with the RMG Director Health and Safety, with the RMG Head of Safety for Programmes and with the RMG Head of Assets where at each meeting we again expressed our strong objections to the removal of 'ALP sleeves' and going over to a 100% 'Correx' sleeves for the above reasons.

Letters have been sent to:

- The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Chief Operating Officer, lodging an official complaint and requesting intervention by the regulator.
- The Royal Mail Group Director of Health and Safety.
- The Royal Mail Group Head of Health.

(Copies of these three letters are attached).

The irony here is that 'informally', members of the Royal Mail Group SHE Team, Assets Team and Programmes Team have expressed the fact that they agree with the Union and the arguments, concerns and objections raised but they can't raise their heads above the parapet for fear of consequences from above!

Further reports will be issued when there are further developments and responses received.

Due to the number of enquiries received on this issue, would ASRs, Branches and IR Reps please ensure that this LTB and attachments is disseminated to local Unit Reps and Members.

Yours sincerely

**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**

---

CWU 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX  
email: [info@cwu.org](mailto:info@cwu.org) Tel: 020 8971 7200 Fax: 020 8971 7300  
*General Secretary: Dave Ward*

 [@DaveWardGS](https://twitter.com/DaveWardGS)  [Dave Ward CWU](https://www.facebook.com/DaveWardCWU)

# Communication Workers Union

**Dave Joyce National Health & Safety Officer**  
**150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London SW19 1RX**  
**Tel: 020 8971 7365/7308 E-Mail: [djoyce@cwu.org](mailto:djoyce@cwu.org)**

30 March 2024

Sarah Albon Chief Executive Officer  
Health and Safety Executive  
Redgrave Court  
Merton Road  
Bootle, Merseyside L20 7HS  
Tel: 0203 028 4354

Sarah,

## **Re: Royal Mail - Serious Health and Safety Failures - 'Correx' Plastic Roll Container Sleeves:**

Further to my 2023 correspondence on this matter, I am writing to lodge a 'formal complaint' against Royal Mail Group and a request for the urgent intervention of the HSE to what has become a national problem across Royal Mail's UK operations in every town and city.

This issue is connected to the new Royal Mail Super Hubs in Northampton in the Midlands and in Warrington in the North West where the manufacture and roll out of replacement 'Plastic' 'Correx' (York) Roll Container Sleeves is underway.

Manufacturing equipment has been installed on site at the Hubs to produce the 'Correx' Sleeves from where they are rolled out across the Royal Mail Network - where the Sleeves are having a negative occupational health impact.

Royal Mail has 750,000 York Containers (Roll Containers). The current sleeve, developed, introduced and fitted to the York Containers is the 'Red' Auto-Levelling-Packet/Parcel (ALP) Sleeve, (Mk2A version). This has been jointly developed, over the years, with the involvement of Royal Mail, CWU, 'Jacon' (Sleeve manufacturers) and 'Hartwall (York Container manufacturers).

The ALP Sleeve is safe and ergonomically designed to minimise musculoskeletal risks and is a tried and tested solution when manually sorting packets, parcels and mail from the Containers.

However, the new 'management regime' in Royal Mail is 'arbitrarily' removing the ALP Sleeves and replacing them with 'White Plastic Correx' material Sleeves or Container liners in order to maximise capacity and improve 'auto-tipping' performance on parcel sorting machines - at the expense of workforce health, safety and musculoskeletal, manual handling risks which workers in the manual operation, sorting from 'Correx Sleeves' are now being exposed to.

Unlike the 'ALP Sleeve' which has an automatically rising base as workers remove the parcels, the 'Correx' is a 'bottomless' liner which means workers have to repetitively, repeatedly bend up and down and twist, stretch and reach into the container to do the same task.

The CWU has strongly objected to this change-over but Royal Mail senior operational leadership is only interested in capacity, performance, efficiency and profit before safety.

If Royal Mail Management continue with these Correx Sleeves in 'Manual Sortation' areas, mainly in Delivery Offices and in some Mail Centres then there will be even more back injuries, arm injuries plus the workforce will suffer long-term cumulative ill-health effects.

It seems ironic and perverse' that whilst 154,000 days were lost to sick leave from Royal Mail in 2022 due to 'Back Pain' costing Royal Mail £16 million and whilst the CWU continues to battle against 'Low Level Letterboxes' - Royal Mail should introduce work equipment - 'Correx Sleeves' with a work method which is not fit for purpose and in which there are musculoskeletal risks that can only make the situation worse, increasing the musculoskeletal, manual handling risks to those employees who are being forced to manually sort from these sleeves, taking health and safety in Royal Mail backwards.

In conclusion - and in relation to 'Correx Sleeves' equipment - the CWU hereby lodges a formal complaint on behalf of our Royal Mail postal worker members and request a full HSE investigation and evaluation of these sleeves and the negative impact on the workforce of this sub-standard, unsafe equipment and unhealthy work.

I trust you'll fully investigate and take appropriate prompt action against Royal Mail. Otherwise I feel that things will continue to deteriorate.

I await your urgent attention to the above.

Yours sincerely



**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**

# Communication Workers Union

**Dave Joyce National Health & Safety Officer**  
**150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London SW19 1RX**  
**Tel: 020 8971 7365/7308 E-Mail: [djoyce@cwu.org](mailto:djoyce@cwu.org)**

4 April 2024

Fiona Macaslan  
Head of Health and Wellbeing  
Royal Mail  
11 Cultins Road  
Edinburgh EH11 4YY

Fiona,

Re: York Container - Correx Sleeves Correspondence:

See attached for your attention.

As RMG Head of Health, I strongly suggest that you should be very concerned about the short term and long term cumulative 'negative' and harmful risks and effects on the health of postal workers processing and sorting mail from York (Roll) Containers' Correx Sleeves, with a work method which is not fit for purpose and is generating increasing numbers of accidents, ill health and sick leave, in combination with fatigue and mental ill health.

Operational management who are pushing the introduction of this ergonomically detrimental equipment, replacing equipment which is safe and sound, need to be challenged and stopped from their current drive of putting performance, efficiency and profit before the safety and health of the workforce.

Thanks

Regards and Best Wishes.,

Yours sincerely



From **Dave Joyce** | National Health, Safety & Environment Officer  
Member TUC Health & Safety Specialists Committee  
**Leader | CWU "Bite-Back" Campaign For Better Dog Control Law & Enforcement**  
Email [djoyce@cwu.org](mailto:djoyce@cwu.org) | Direct line 020 8971 7365  
Communication Workers Union, The communications union  
**Headquarters** 150 The Broadway | Wimbledon | SW19 1RX  
**T** 020 8971 7200 | **F** 02089717300 | [www.cwu.org](http://www.cwu.org) | [@CWUNews](https://twitter.com/CWUNews)

**PS: Due to the current IT blackout at CWU/HQ following the Cyber Attack this communication is being send in the good old traditional way via the post.CWU HQ cannot receive or sent e-mail until further notice. It should be resolved in the near future.**

# Communication Workers Union

**Dave Joyce National Health & Safety Officer**  
**150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London SW19 1RX**  
**Tel: 020 8971 7365/7308 E-Mail: [djoyce@cwu.org](mailto:djoyce@cwu.org)**

30 March 2024

Elizabeth Lloyd  
Health and Safety Director  
Royal Mail Group HQ,  
Email: [Lizz.lloyd@royalmail.com](mailto:Lizz.lloyd@royalmail.com)

Sue Cuddihey  
Head of Safety for Programmes  
Royal Mail Operations HQ  
Email: [sue.c.cuddihey@royalmail.com](mailto:sue.c.cuddihey@royalmail.com)

Liz/Sue,

**Re: Introduction of 'Correx' York Container Sleeves - Serious Health, Safety & Ergonomic Concerns and Safety Management Failures:**

I write further to my 2023 correspondence, including my 30 October 2023 letter - none of which have received a reply.

Firstly the introduction of 'Correx' York Container Sleeves into the Manual Operation and removal of the 'Auto-Levelling Sleeves which has already seen around 50 Accidents to Royal Mail workforce employees involving 'Correx' (which we know) plus injuries now being reported by Royal Mail customers - plus the safe system of work is just not fit for purpose and a deluge of complaints have and continue to be received from Offices, CWU Health and Safety Reps and Branches across the UK.

The 'Correx' sleeves, being manufactured at the new Super Hubs are additionally an operational burden due to their frailty and lack of sustainability.

On the day of my visit to the Midlands Super Hub I was shown a huge area full of York Containers with broken, damaged and wrecked 'Correx' Sleeves. I was told there was around 3,000 there awaiting replacement.

A week later I arranged for two of my CWU ASRs to visit the Milton Keynes site where York Containers are stored and repaired by RMP&FS. On the day of their visit there were 13,000 York Containers with broken, damaged and wrecked 'Correx' sleeves awaiting replacement.

Further to my 2023 correspondence on this matter, I am writing to lodge a 'formal complaint' against Royal Mail Group Operations and a request the urgent intervention of yourself and the CEO to whom you report, to address what has become a national problem across Royal Mail's UK operations in every town and city in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This issue is connected to the new Royal Mail Super Hubs in Northampton in the Midlands and in Warrington in the North West where the manufacture and roll out of replacement 'Plastic' 'Correx' (York) Roll Container Sleeves is underway.

Manufacturing equipment has been installed on site at the Hubs to produce the 'Correx' Sleeves from where they are rolled out across the Royal Mail Network - where the Sleeves are having a negative occupational health impact.

Royal Mail has 750,000 York Containers (Roll Containers). The current sleeve, developed, introduced and fitted to the York Containers is the 'Red' Auto-Levelling-Packet/Parcel (ALP) Sleeve, (Mk2A version). This has been jointly developed, over the years, with the involvement of Royal Mail, CWU, 'Jacon' (Sleeve manufacturers) and 'Hartwall' (York Container manufacturers).

The ALP Sleeve is safe and ergonomically designed to minimise musculoskeletal risks and is a tried and tested solution when manually sorting packets, parcels and mail from the Containers.

However, the new Operational 'management regime' in Royal Mail is 'arbitrarily' removing the ALP Sleeves and replacing them with 'White Plastic Correx' material Sleeves or Container liners in order to maximise capacity and improve 'auto-tipping' performance on parcel sorting machines - at the expense of workforce health, safety and musculoskeletal, manual handling risks which workers in the manual operation, sorting from 'Correx Sleeves' are now being exposed to.

Unlike the 'ALP Sleeve' which has an automatically rising base as workers remove the parcels, the 'Correx' is a 'bottomless' liner which means workers have to repetitively, repeatedly bend up and down and twist, stretch and reach into the container to do the same task.

The CWU has continually, strongly objected to this change-over but Royal Mail senior operational leadership is only interested in capacity, performance, efficiency and profit before safety - as was confirmed by your predecessor Phil Graham.

If Royal Mail Management continue with these Correx Sleeves in 'Manual Sortation' areas, mainly in Delivery Offices and in some Mail Centres then there will be even more back injuries, arm injuries plus the workforce will suffer long-term cumulative ill-health effects.

It seems ironic and perverse' that whilst 154,000 days were lost to sick leave from Royal Mail in 2022 due to 'Back Pain' costing Royal Mail £16 million and whilst the CWU continues to battle against 'Low Level Letterboxes' - Royal Mail should introduce work equipment - 'Correx Sleeves' with a work method which is not fit for purpose and in which there are musculoskeletal risks that can only make the situation worse, increasing the musculoskeletal, manual handling risks to those employees who are being forced to manually sort from these sleeves, taking health and safety in Royal Mail backwards.

In conclusion - and in relation to 'Correx Sleeves' equipment - the CWU hereby lodges a formal complaint on behalf of our Royal Mail postal worker members and request a full investigation, and evaluation review of these sleeves and the negative impact on the workforce of this sub-standard, unsafe equipment and unhealthy work and a Safe System of Work which is not fit for purpose and not worth the paper it's written on because it's not practical, it slows down the operation, it fails to control the risks and it presents other risks. Hence no employee follows it.



I trust you'll fully investigate and take appropriate prompt action. Otherwise I feel that things will continue to deteriorate.

Correx Sleeves should be scrapped entirely or at the very least kept completely out of the manual operation.

I await your urgent attention to the above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Joyce', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**

## Bring out all your red ALP sleeves for recycling

15 April 2024

As a business we are moving away from using red Auto Levelling Packet (ALP) sleeves and fully converting our operation to using white sleeves which perform better in our automation.

We are now looking to recycle all remaining red sleeves across our business. Our recycling partners will be collecting all red sleeves from Atherstone Parcel Sort Centre (PSC) during April and May 2024.

**Action required:**

Please ensure that **any red ALP sleeves in your unit are sent to Atherstone PSC as the consolidation point urgently** to be recycled.

- All red ALP sleeves should be collapsed and stacked on a York (between 8 & 10 ALPs) following the presentation standards below.
- All red ALP sleeves should be labelled and sent through the network for Atherstone, either sent direct or via your parent hub on your 2C/T48 networks.



Correct



Wrong

Thank you for your support.

**Gary Yeo**  
Head of Assets

Visit [myroyalmail.com](https://myroyalmail.com) or  workplace  
for the latest news and updates