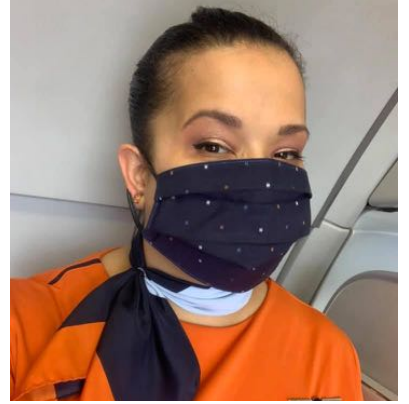


“Nobody knew anything,” one IFC said. “I felt like JetBlue was trying to respond and react as quickly as it could but was caught off-guard. They tried to get us PPE, tried to get us anti-bacterial wipes, tried to ensure there were extra gloves on the plane, but as fast as they could get them they were gone.”

Union advocacy and action helped improve conditions for IFCs. Cucuzza and Shane Rogers-Mauro, chairman of the B6 Health & Safety Committee, sent a letter with a list of safety-related recommendations to JetBlue President and Chief Operating Officer Johanna Geraghty in early March. The recommendations included: providing IFCs with higher-grade gloves and allowing them to wear them throughout flights; mounting hand sanitizer dispensers on aircraft for crewmembers and passengers; encouraging sick crewmembers to stay home, and suspending any disciplinary system that penalized their absences.



“We believe the time to add to our procedures is TODAY before we fall behind,” Rogers-Mauro and Cucuzza wrote. “Awareness is most important, yet having the tools to prevent a catastrophe for our flight attendants is a must, and we respectfully request the enclosed changes in our coronavirus response protocols.”

The company adopted most of the recommendations. The International Transport Workers Union, meanwhile, purchased masks and began distributing them to IFCs in late March and early April before management was able to secure supplies.

TWU also called on the airline and federal regulators to mandate passengers cover their faces. JetBlue agreed and became the first airline with such a requirement. The policy went into effect on May 4.

“We convinced JetBlue to do that,” Samuelson said at the time. “We’ve been working for weeks on a list of safety items for our JetBlue flight attendants. High up on that list was the requirement that passengers wear masks. This is another example of why workers should organize and form unions.”



“They are real heroes,” Angelo Cucuzza, TWU IFC coordinator, said of IFCs. “They made sure the skies remained open so that first responders and essential workers could travel to different cities and regions that were suffering.”