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Postmates' Coronavirus 'Relief Fund' Pays Drivers as Little as \$30

By Joseph Cox

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Postmates' "Fleet Relief Fund," which is supposed to help drivers struggling through the coronavirus pandemic, is paying some drivers as little as \$30, Motherboard has learned.

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“Postmates made it difficult to access my COVID-19 Fleet Relief pay,” one Postmates driver who said they got sick, although not necessarily specifically from coronavirus, told Motherboard. Two drivers told Motherboard the relief payment can be as low as \$30. Motherboard granted multiple drivers in this story anonymity in case they faced retaliation from Postmates.

In March delivery app Postmates announced the company’s “Fleet Relief Fund” that would give money to drivers to help them with medical expenses related to

the pandemic. If a driver tested positive for COVID-19 or is required to self quarantine, Postmates said it would pay them up to two weeks of lost income while they recover. Postmates also offered parts of the relief fund more generally to its drivers to help deal with the coronavirus, as long as they live in one of the states with confirmed cases of COVID-19, have completed at least one Postmates delivery since February 25, and have a Starship Health Savings Account (HSA), which Postmates offers its drivers.

“In response to the ongoing concern around the spread of COVID-19 in many of our affected markets, Postmates has created a fund to provide members of our Fleet with a relief credit to be used for health expenses such as co-pays or wellness products,” an FAQ for the fund on Postmates’ website reads.

A Postmates spokesperson confirmed that some drivers who sought assistance from the fund only received \$30, and said this payment is from the part of the fund for drivers who haven’t been officially diagnosed, but are nervous about coughing symptoms or perhaps want to receive a preventative check-up.

Do you work for Postmates or know about any other issues with delivery apps during the coronavirus pandemic? We’d love to hear from you. Using a non-work phone or computer, you can contact Joseph Cox securely on

Signal on +44 20 8133 5190, Wickr on josephcox, OTR chat on jfcox@jabber.ccc.de, or email joseph.cox@vice.com.

Getting tested for the coronavirus can be especially difficult in the U.S. even if someone has likely been exposed to the virus. Tests are not widely available, and some hospitals are not necessarily testing everyone who exhibits symptoms, such as having a fever and dry cough. This means that drivers who fall sick may only be able to get the lower bracket of Postmates relief as they haven't technically tested positive.

In some cases \$30 won't actually cover a co-pay for a medical appointment even with insurance. Many Postmates gig workers won't have insurance at all; Postmates does not provide it to its drivers.

In September last year Postmates raised another \$225 million at a \$2.4 billion valuation.

“Postmates has unveiled the Fleet Relief Fund with varying payout levels to support workers across a range of covid-related circumstances including but not limited to: covering the cost of medical costs, doctors visits & co-pays (even if you’re not diagnosed with Covid); covering costs of protective equipment; income replacement for those who are quarantined, taking care of a loved one, advised to remain at home or diagnosed; and other circumstances,” Postmates added in a statement.

Postmates argued that with \$30 from Postmates a driver could buy their own hand sanitizer or masks to protect themselves. There is a shortage of face masks in the country.

Postmates has taken other steps to protect drivers in the wake of the coronavirus. Customers are given the option to ask for a so-called non-contact delivery, where a driver will leave their food, snacks, or other supplies at their door rather than come into the building to avoid potential exposure.

Postmates is not giving drivers that option however, instead leaving them either to see if the customer makes the request, or texting the customer to say they would prefer no contact and hoping that doesn't impact their rating on the app.

“Drivers should be able to request no contact deliveries. At this point, it should have already been an option,” a third driver said. DoorDash, another delivery app, has made all orders non-contact by default.

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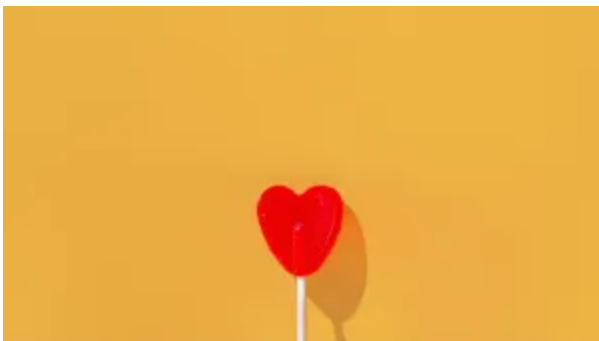
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