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July 11, 2017

Attention: All Members
CUPE Local 873

Dear Members,

Re: BC State of Emergency/Wildfire Support

On July 8, 2017, the BC Government declared a provincial state of emergency, due to the worsening wildfire situation. These fires are having a significant impact on BCEHS operations, as well as our members and their families. We write to you to provide a brief update, to ensure you're aware of the support available to you.

Safety

Above all, safety is critical for all Paramedics and Dispatchers working in the affected areas. Wildfires can be very difficult to predict and can quickly change direction or behaviour. Sudden changes may result in roads being blocked or otherwise unsafe to travel. Heavy smoke can also reduce visibility and cause severe breathing problems for you and your patients.

Please ensure that safety is your paramount thought when working in these challenging conditions. If you believe an area you're being asked to respond to is unsafe, please contact your dispatch centre or your direct supervisor to discuss your concerns BEFORE proceeding. Sometimes those people deciding where to send resources may not be aware of a new hazard in the area, so it is critical that responding crews recognize and report any concerns. Remember, a N95 mask is NOT a respirator and does NOT protect you from the gases created by fire.

Another major concern is fatigue. We're aware that the Employer is rotating in additional crews from other areas of the province. Please ensure you're watching each other for signs of physical or emotional fatigue. Remember that we cannot help our patients if we end up injured ourselves.

Support

CUPE 873 has allocated funds for support in a number of ways. Today we have donated \$2,500 to the BC Red Cross Wildfire response, to support the general public who have been evacuated.

Additionally, we have partnered with CUPE BC and many of other CUPE Locals in the creation of an emergency support fund for affected CUPE members. CUPE 873 initial donation to the fund is \$2,500, while CUPE BC has contributed \$10,000. These funds are available to CUPE members and their families who are experiencing a hardship due to the wildfires. Some examples of hardship may be (but not limited to): lost home, evacuated, separated from family, special needs assistance, care for pets or livestock, etc.

How to request financial support

Please email our Union office at: info@apbc.ca - be sure to include ALL the following information:

1. Your name:
2. Your Station:
3. Your Phone & Mailing Address: (Be sure to include an address we can mail a cheque to during the emergency)
4. Brief Description of Hardship:

Union Regional Vice-Presidents are available in all areas in the province to assist members with any questions they may have about matters arising from the collective agreement (e.g. pay, emergency leaves, TMA, etc.) RVP's contact information can be [found here: http://www.apbc.ca/members-area/contacts/regional-vice-presidents/](http://www.apbc.ca/members-area/contacts/regional-vice-presidents/)

Additional support is available for all members through both the BCEHS CIS Program and Homewood Employee Assistance Program:

- BCEHS CIS Pager: 1-855-969-4321
- Employee Assistance Program: 1.800.663.1142 / <http://homewoodhumansolutions.com>

Deployment Questions

If you're available to deploy in the wildfire effort, please contact the Provincial Scheduling Office at: 1-844-875-7181 or bcas.scheduling@phsa.ca

The Employer has established a Facebook group to provide operational updates to staff. If you haven't joined already, you can do so at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/316326912128717/>

Thank you for the work you're doing day and night, not only in the wildfire zones, but all across this province. Stay safe out there.

Sincerely,

Provincial Executive Committee
Ambulance Paramedics of BC
CUPE Local 873

CE/sw/MoveUp

