

COVID-19 Update - March 19, 2020

Brothers & Sisters,

Below is our latest membership update:

On Tuesday as of 1800 hrs, a state of emergency was declared in the city of Vaughan, of which the Association was not informed. As we have seen numerous times, this Administration continues to “forget to notify” the Association and only react until pressured to be proactive. While yes, this is an unprecedented situation and there will be lessons learned, it will not be at the expense of our members’ well-being.

- Please continue to support each other.
- Do not come into the workplace if you are unwell.
- Contact any member of the Peer Support Team, Executive Board and Health & Safety Reps should you have any concerns.

Health and Safety

Over the past week we have continued to engage with both the Association as well as the Management Team, as we all work through the problems that the growth and spread of COVID-19 has continued in the GTA. Though some issues have been resolved there remain guidelines and items that will need to continually be monitored and discussed.

The update in the questionnaire with the increased access to knowledge will provide our firefighters with the ability to make smart decisions when engaging patients from a distance. The addition of goggles to the apparatus bring us in line with both CDC and IAFF recommendations for personal protective equipment. This with the limiting of contamination by engaging citizens from a distance will lead to a decrease in risk to all firefighters.

It is important to remember that we each need to decon properly and limit exposure in the cab of the truck and at stations. Putting a series of plastic bags on the truck to isolate this contaminated equipment in compartments until put into the trash will provide a clean cab model. This will act to keep it a safe place for all firefighters and crews. Wiping down common touch points at the beginning of the shift or after a potential exposure is also a good practice to limit the spread. The completion of exposure reports also exist should you wish to document an incident of concern.

Should you have any questions or concerns please feel free to reach out to any member of the Health and Safety Committee.

Alternate Work Schedules

After consulting the Association, alternate work arrangements have been put into place for some of our divisions – if worse comes to worst, we are investigating the feasibility of cross training our members to help in shorthanded divisions.

Identifying “At-Risk” Members

We want to identify those within our membership who are over the age of 55 and/or may be immunocompromised. In developing contingency plans, limiting exposure of those who are most at-risk during this time may help us in preserving the well-being of our membership as a whole. Any members falling into this category are to contact President M. Wilson directly.

In-Station

In states of emergency, changes to the FPPA may be made, resulting in increased flexibility in the number of hours firefighters are allowed to work. Overtime/skeleton crews could be a real possibility in the weeks ahead. This may be a good time to start a discussion in each station about leaving all group kitty doors unlocked for the foreseeable future (locking up any valuables, of course) to minimize a crew’s need to leave a station. Your brothers and sisters will thank you.

Community Awareness

Cooking together on-shift has always been a long-standing fire service tradition. In a time of social isolation outside of the workplace, this tradition could help maintain some normalcy in our current unconventional day-to-day schedules. As a reminder when grocery shopping in the community - please be aware of the new store policies that may set aside certain hours for the elderly and vulnerable.

If ordering take-out or delivery, request contactless delivery to reduce the risk of person-to-person transmission and dispose of any take out bags or containers as soon as possible.

Mark Wilson

President

Vaughan PFFA