PUBLIC SAFETY LIFELINE VOLUNTEERS

The information below is intended to support the health and safety of the Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer (PSLV) program during this period of heightened concern. This information generally applies to all PSLV disciplines. Individual disciplines may release more specific information pertaining to their programs in addition to this update.

The safety of volunteers remains a top priority and all PSLV groups are encouraged to follow the guidance and precautions from the Ministry of Health, Worksafe BC, the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC). In all manner of response, PSLV teams should adhere to recommendations from the Provincial Health Officer around gathering size to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

Training may be conducted at the discretion of the Local or First Nations’ Government. EMBC recommends that teams who choose to continue training limit the size of the session, consider online training alternatives and observe social distancing as recommended by the Provincial Health Officer.

PSLV leadership are directed to the BCEMs response priorities, the first of which are:

1. Ensure the safety and health of all staff and responders
2. Save lives and reduce suffering
3. Protect the public

Special attention should be taken to guide all actions towards these priorities.

RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES:

To ensure the Province of British Columbia is in the best position to protect volunteers, EMBC offers the following recommendations to promote regular and thorough hand washing and promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace:

- Place sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace.
- Increase hand sanitizer supplies in high traffic areas and public counters.
- Display posters and provided visual aids promoting hand-washing/hand-sanitizing and promoting respiratory hygiene.

These common-sense practices help prevent infection and transmission:

- Hand washing.
- Sneeze or cough into your sleeve.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Practice social distancing (a minimum of 2 metres/6.56 feet)

EMBC also recommends taking steps to increase the frequency and depth of facility cleaning as a preventative measure to further protect employees, volunteers and the public.
Supervisors at all levels should consider the risk that a volunteer could pose by endangering the health of multiple other essential service staff, which could jeopardize the ability to provide essential services. PSLV volunteers should follow the recommended 14-day self-isolation after travel and ensure volunteers know not to deploy if they are symptomatic. We are asking people to self-monitor their health and to apply a low threshold when feeling unwell to stay home until they are better.

Supervisors should reinforce at the beginning of an activation or training that if anyone starts to feel unwell as the day progresses, they have the right and responsibility to leave to protect others. Sometimes people need permission to self-evaluate if they feel they are needed at a worksite. If a volunteer is visibly ill (coughing, signs of fever), avoid generating stigma and approach them with privacy and respect while minimizing contact. Provide information from this document or other. We also recommend taking steps to increase cleaning in your facilities as a preventative measure to further protect employees, volunteers and the public.

Anyone who is concerned that they, or someone with whom they have had close contact, may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should cease work when safe to do so, self isolate and contact their health-care provider or call public health at 8-1-1. If a PSLV volunteer is planning to see a health care provider about suspected COVID-19, they should inform their health care provider when calling for an appointment so that appropriate protective measures can be taken.

As a PSLV volunteer, you are not obligated to respond to an activation. If you have concerns about your personal health and safety, you have the right to refuse volunteer support roles in your PSLV program. See Occupational Health & Safety – Guidelines Part 3.12 Refusal of Unsafe Work for additional information.

Should a volunteer respond to an activation, note the following procedural updates for all PSLV volunteers:

**RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Do not deploy if you feel unwell or if you are symptomatic or if you’ve been in close contact with a symptomatic person.
- Restock your “Grab & Go” kit, and ensure it includes hand soap, hand sanitizer and gloves.
- Greet others with a smile, but no handshakes or hugs, maintaining at least an arm’s length distance.
- Ask those you are supporting if they are sick or have been sick recently. If the answer is yes, please advise the site supervisor immediately. Volunteers should minimize contact with the subject and seek to isolate them. This should be done in a private and respectful manner. The local health authority should be contacted to determine next steps.
- Ensure that all work surfaces are cleaned before and after assisting others with disinfectant wipes.
- Do not handle the belongings of those you are supporting.

PSLV should note recommendations for safety provided by WorkSafe BC in addition to any other safety requirements of the activity they perform. As stated by WorkSafe BC, the BC Centre for Disease Control advises “that it may be less effective to wear a mask in the community when a person is not sick themselves. Masks may give a person a false sense of security and are likely to increase the number of
times a person will touch their own face (e.g., to adjust the mask).” Therefore purchases of PPE such as respirators or face masks are not recommended.

WorkSafeBC adjudicates all worker claims and the province cannot provide advance assurance that a claim will be eligible in any particular circumstance. All PSLV should familiarize themselves with WorkSafe BC recommendations for workers and employers. Supervisors should familiarize themselves with workplace recommendations from the BC Centre for Disease Control. Additionally, the BC Centre for Disease Control maintains a commonly asked questions page to inform safe work practices.

The Federal Government has provided additional clarification about who is eligible for Employment Insurance to include compensation for people who are ill or have to self-isolate, including people who would not normally be eligible such as self-employed people.

Additional amplifications and considerations for each PSLV discipline may be released as new information becomes available. Questions regarding this or other PSLV policies should be directed towards a relevant EMBC regional office or activated Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre (PREOC).