



Alberta Health
Services

Human Resources

Returning to Work In Fort McMurray

Information and Resources for Staff and Physicians

A message from Shelly Pusch, Chief Zone Officer, North Zone and Dr. Kevin Worry, Zone Medical Director:

Dear Fort McMurray Physicians, Staff and Volunteers,

Welcome back to Fort McMurray and to work! We can hardly imagine all that you and your loved ones have been through in the last few weeks.

In the midst of an unprecedented disaster, you - staff and physicians of Fort McMurray - have exhibited tremendous bravery and determination. Even when battling fear, uncertainty and fatigue, you have risen above with grace and humility.

You have worked together as a team, stronger than ever, despite the circumstances.

We are very proud of each and every one of you, and want to say thank you for all that you have done and continue to do for our patients, families and the community of Fort McMurray.

With our collective return to Fort McMurray, we have new opportunities and challenges to improve the lives and futures of the citizens of this wonderful community.

Whether you are helping to restore AHS services, providing clinical care and support, providing outreach care and support, or maintaining one of our many facilities we appreciate the important, vital work that you are doing.

And whether you are working in a leadership role, continuing to help with re-entry and recovery, transporting patients, providing emotional well-being services, carrying out diagnostic testing, providing nourishment, or serving in any one of the many other important capacities in AHS, you are integral to ensuring that health services are highly effective.

We want to highlight the following priorities as critical to our continued success:

- Effective communication and service
- Quality care
- Safety
- NLRHC restoration
- Mental Health
- Temporary Urgent Care Centre and area operations
- AHS Community Infrastructure and service recovery
- Environmental Public Health

Thank you for working along with so many others to help re-build a strong, vibrant and healthy community.

Most importantly, we want you to take care of yourselves and each other as we continue on this journey to full recovery. Please know we are here for you and will continue to support you during this time of re-entry and recovery.

Resources and Supports for Staff Returning to Work

We recognize that returning to work following the evacuation is a process that will be different for each individual depending on how they were impacted by the fire, whether it is physically or emotionally. AHS is committed to ensuring that staff feel safe and able to return to work during this time, and we encourage staff to speak with their managers or Human Resources about any issues that they are experiencing.

Below is a list of resources and supports that are available to staff to assist them as they return to the community and work places.

1. **Employee Family Assistance Program** (see EFAP pamphlet) This is a free and confidential service provided by Morneau Shepell and they have staff trained in trauma recovery and response. Below is the process for contacting our EFAP:
 - Call the EFAP line at 1-877-273-3134
 - Let them know if you have been personally impacted by the Fort McMurray wildfires.
 - Shepell will augment its intake process so that you will be put on an expedited path to counseling and appointments for further follow up if necessary.
 - If possible, please be ready to talk about what you may be looking for in terms of services and support. For example, you may not want trauma support, but you may want to know where you can take your children while you attend to the cleaning of your home or property.
 - If you're not sure, call them and ask. They are there to help.

2. Health and Wellness Education Sessions

There is a combination of both online and in-person educational sessions developed to support staff impacted by the Fort McMurray fire upon their return to work.

Psychological First Aid (4 hour workshop and pre-requisite to Skills for Psychological Recovery)

Psychological First Aid is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the aftermath of disaster and terrorism. This is a half day workshop. The Core Actions you will learn include

- Contact and Engagement
- Safety and Comfort
- Stabilization
- Information Gathering: Current Needs and Concerns
- Practical Assistance
- Connection with Social Supports
- Information on Coping
- Linkage with Collaborative Services

Skills for Psychological Recovery (2 day workshop- Psychological First Aid pre-requisite required)

Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR) is an evidence-informed modular intervention that aims to help survivors gain skills to manage distress and cope with post-disaster stress and adversity.

SPR is not formal mental health treatment, but a secondary prevention model that utilizes skills-building components that have been found helpful in a variety of post-trauma situations. Research suggests that a skills-building approach is more effective than supportive counseling. *SPR* is appropriate for developmental levels across the lifespan, and is culturally informed. Skills can be taught individually, with families, and in groups.

Heart Math – Relieve Your Stress Now (1 hour workshop)

During this workshop you will learn:

- What stress is and how it can impact your ability to be at your best
- How stress and emotions impact your body, brain, and emotional health
- How to transform negative emotional and physiological effects that occur when you experience feelings of stress
- How to manage stress and building resiliency by using a HeartMath® technique that can be used in the moment to de-stress, gain energy, increase productivity, and more

Grief and Loss (3 hour workshop)

“Grief and Adjustment” gives both theoretical/clinical grief model information to help participants recognize people’s reactions. It also incorporates a piece for the managers themselves to see where they are in the grief and loss cycle and gives them tools to recognize and stabilize their own anxiety.

For information regarding training sessions and how to register, please speak with the onsite available Human Resources staff.

3. **Onsite Human Resources Support**

Human Resources staff will be located on-site while employees are returning to work to provide in-person support and guidance on various topics including:

- Wellness supports available to staff;
- Other supports available to staff;
- Administrative processes including leave requests and scheduling;
- Medical issues and associated leaves;
- Collective Agreement administration;
- Benefits and pension.
- Payroll and time coding;

4. Below is a list of other contacts that you may need to access during your return to work:

- a) **Abilities Management** (for questions or concerns regarding medical leaves):
Bonnie Stutheit, Ability Advisor: 780-350-3170 or bonnie.stutheit@ahs.ca
- b) **HR Contact Centre** (for issues regarding payroll, timekeeping, benefits, pension, etc.):
1-877-511-4455
- c) **Alberta Blue Cross**
1-800-661-6995
- d) **Onsite Resources for Return to Work:**
A team of Human Resources, Medical Affairs, Workplace Health and Safety and Learning and Professional Development staff are available at the Syncrude Sports and Wellness Centre, located next to the temporary Urgent Care Clinic. This support will be available for a temporary time at this location, to answer questions for staff and physicians returning to work and reentering the community.

Important Information:

In general, staff will be supported by income continuance until their scheduled return to work date. If there are situations where staff cannot return to Fort McMurray, these will be identified and appropriate income considerations will be addressed depending on the circumstances. We expect there to be a number of scenarios depending on individual circumstances, and in particular related to housing availability.

Temporary or permanent housing is defined as reasonably stable accommodations allowing employees to resume the majority of their daily routine, and employees are expected to be in a state of readiness to return to work when this has been made available. This may include hotels, staying with friends, rental housing, temporary government funded housing or their own residences. Alberta Health Services is exploring our ability to offer lodging to staff that do not have housing arranged. As noted, we'd like to see as many staff return to their normal duties as possible, and if accommodation is needed, we will attempt to secure it.

We understand that there are a number of employees whose housing was damaged or destroyed in the fire. Employees may request a delay in their return to work date from their manager based on their personal circumstances. Disaster income continuance will continue for a reasonable amount of time until temporary housing is offered. Employees will be expected to be in regular communication with their managers during this time.

The expectation is that once temporary or permanent housing is made available to an employee they are in a state of readiness to resume working. If your home was destroyed or severely damaged, government is working on a plan to support your housing needs on an interim basis.

Employees can also access www.emergency.alberta.ca for housing resources.

More information about re-entry into Fort McMurray including resources and supports can be found in the Government of Alberta Re-Entry Information Booklet: <http://asset.rmwb.ca/files/RMWB-Re-Entry%20Information-Booklet.pdf>.

Additional Resources

1. Employee and Family Assistance Program (Morneau Shepell) Brochure (pdf. doc)
2. North Zone Request for Leave Form
3. Support for Albertans Affected by Wildfire (pdf. doc)