

FAQs for Employees Returning to Work in Fort McMurray

Updated: May 27, 2016

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR FORT MCMURRAY STAFF:

As you know, ongoing efforts continue to support the re-entry of residents into FMM, including the phased reactivation of the NLRHC and other AHS services. All FMM staff will be contacted directly by the AHS Human Resources team or their manager, with details regarding return to work date in addition to other supporting information.

We are asking employees to be back in Fort McMurray and available to return to work on June 7, 2016.

HR will be calling all Fort McMurray employees on May 30 and 31, letting you know of this date. This does not mean that you will be starting work on June 7 – this will depend on which units and services are opened on that date, or on future dates as hospital restoration continues.

You will be contacted again prior to June 7th with respect to further details surrounding the specific date you will be required to return to your unit/service.

By providing employees with the June 7 date, this will provide you with an opportunity to plan your return to the community and to work. This will also provide us with a workforce which we can easily, quickly and conveniently mobilize as other hospital areas and services return.

Contact began Thursday May 26th for those that may be needed to work to support reactivation of the Emergency Department at NLRHC. Other services are subject to staged reactivation. We fully understand that there will be many different scenarios depending on your individual circumstances, and our ability to plan for reactivation and appropriate supports for staff is dependent on discussion with you.

The following are questions that we can answer at this time:

Q1. How will my return to work date be determined?

Q1. Return to work dates will be dictated by the phased plans to reactivate the AHS services and facilities in Fort McMurray. Much of this plan is dependent on the recovery and cleaning efforts to ensure that the facilities are ready for staff to work safely and ready for patients. The first phase is reopening of the Emergency Department at the NLRHC. Services for Diagnostic Imaging, Lab and Environmental Services are also required in order to re-open. Dates will be communicated for other areas of the NLRHC and other services as they are known.

Staff may be contacted about working temporarily in an area other than their normal unit/service through the phased re-opening of the hospital, respecting their skills and knowledge, and with appropriate orientation.

However, staff are expected to be back in Fort McMurray and available for work on June 7. We want to stress how important it is for us to have staff return to work in the community and will work with you, as much as possible, to make that happen.

Q2. How will compensation be handled for impacted employees once they are provided with a return to work date?

A2. We expect there to be a number of scenarios depending on individual circumstances, and in particular related to housing availability. 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.

Q3. What is meant by “temporary or permanent housing”?

A3. 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 secured. This may include hotels, staying with friends, rental housing, temporary government funded housing or their own residences.

Q4. Will AHS be providing temporary lodging in order for me to return to work if I don’t have temporary or permanent housing as indicated above?

A4. We are 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.

Q5. I have been given my return date by my manager but I do not have temporary or permanent housing and haven’t been offered temporary lodging. Am I required to return and if not, will I continue to receive salary continuance?

A5. 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. Disaster income continuance will continue for a reasonable amount of time until temporary housing is offered or temporary or permanent housing can be secured. Once the employee returns to work, normal time coding will be utilized. 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.

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

Q6. I have been called back to work and have temporary/permanent housing, but need to take some time off to take care of some personal matters related to the disaster. How will this be paid?

A6. We understand that many employees will require time off to attend to personal matters resulting from the disaster (insurance issues, home reparations, etc.). For employees who have temporary or permanent housing, the expectation is that they are in a state of readiness to work.

Requests for time off or delays in returning to work will be handled through regular processes and employees will be able to access their available banks (vacation, personal leave, stat/overtime banks, etc.).

Q7. I have not yet been called back to work as my unit/area is not yet open and there is no other work for me. Will I continue to be paid until I am called back to work?

A7. Yes, your income continuance will continue until you are called back to work.

Q8. I do not want to return to Fort McMurray. Will AHS help to find me alternate employment within the organization?

A8. Employees who are not planning on returning to Fort McMurray should be advising their managers of this as soon as possible so that next steps can be discussed.

Q9. Am I able to work remotely if I don't have temporary or permanent housing in Fort McMurray right now?

A9. Those currently residing outside of the province during the closure of the facility will not be permitted to work remotely from their temporary out of province residence. This is due to the various differences in legislation between provinces including OHS, WCB and Employment Standards.

Those who are currently residing within the province of Alberta should contact their manager to request to work remotely. Requests will be considered individually based on logistical requirements, systems access and operational needs. Those working remotely must adhere to all relevant AHS policies including the following:

[Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#)

[Guidelines for Safeguarding Information](#)

Employees are reminded that these arrangements can be ended at any point in time by management and in accordance with the collective agreement if applicable.

Q10. I have been called back to work but the day I am supposed to be there is a day I already have scheduled for vacation, is the employer cancelling my vacation?

A10. You should discuss this with your manager to determine whether your return to work can be delayed or whether the vacation needs to be rescheduled as per applicable collective agreement processes and provisions.

Q11. I have been called back to work but I am unable to return to work due to medical reasons. Can I take some more time before I return to work?

A11. You should talk to your manager about your needs right now and you may be eligible for time off, using appropriate coding, based on your personal circumstances.

EMPLOYEE SUPPORTS

Q12. What other supports are available to me right now?

A12. Upon return to worksites, there will be additional supports and resources available to staff including, but not limited to, health and wellness resources, education sessions and HR support. Information regarding these supports will be communicated to employees.

The Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) is also available to support you and your family through this challenging time. The EFAP can be contacted 24/7 online or by phone at 1-877-273-3134.

Below is the process for contacting EFAP:

- Call the EFAP line at 1-877-273-3134
- Let them know if you have been personally impacted by the Fort McMurray wildfires.
- Morneau 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.

Q13. What are some of the supports available through my union or professional association?

A13. Employees are encouraged to contact their union and professional associations to obtain information about what other supports are available during this time.

Q14. Where can I find out more about re-entry into Fort McMurray?

Q14. 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>.

COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENTS OF RE-ENTRY

Q15. I am currently residing out of province and I have been called back to work. Will AHS pay to fly me back to return to work?

A15. AHS Employees who evacuated to various locations across Alberta or to other provinces are responsible for their travel costs back to Fort McMurray. Employees are encouraged to contact their personal insurance companies for information about cost recovery during a disaster.

Q16. I was part of the group of AHS staff who evacuated with patients -will AHS pay to return me to Fort McMurray?

A16. Employees should consult with their manager. Expense reimbursement will be assessed on a case by case basis.