



UNITED ASSOCIATION
of Journeymen & Apprentices of the
PLUMBING & PIPEFITTING
Industry of the United States and Canada
Local Union 170 – Affiliated with AFL-CIO-CFL

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COVID-19 UPDATE

Dear Members:

We have been fielding several calls regarding the Coronavirus pandemic and I would like to provide you with further information and answers to some of the common questions & concerns.

We hope, above all, that our members and their families remain healthy during this critical time. We understand and share your concerns as this fast moving pandemic progresses. Please be assured that we are actively monitoring all updates from the Provincial Health Officer and we have been in contact with labour leaders, government agencies and with the employer community throughout the weekend, ensuring we have accurate and timely information and that we keep the health and safety of our members at the forefront. We will continue to re-assess and re-evaluate this rapidly changing situation and will pass on information to the membership as we receive it.

I urge everyone to do their part in trying to limit the spread of COVID-19 by following the guidelines from our provincial health officials and the World Health Organization: wash your hands, avoid touching your face, stay home if you are sick, and maintain “social distancing”.

Local 170 Office & Dispatch

Our offices and dispatch offices are OPEN for the time being, but we strongly encourage all members to come to the office only if absolutely necessary. Most services can be accessed online or by phone. If the person you are trying to reach is not available – leave a message. Your voice message is immediately emailed to the person and they will return your call as soon as possible.

The Membership Meeting originally scheduled for this Thursday, March 19, 2020 has been **CANCELLED**. We will see you at our next regularly scheduled meeting: Thursday, April 9, 2020.

UA Piping Industry College of BC

The BC Building Trades has been in touch with the Industry Training Authority (ITA), and at this time, the ITA is encouraging all trainers to use their own judgement on whether or not to hold classes. For the time being, UAPICBC training classes will move ahead as scheduled for next week (March 16-20), but this will be re-evaluated over the next few days as we get further updates from the Provincial Health Officer and the ITA. In the event that classes are postponed or cancelled, the ITA has received confirmation that the EI process will be reviewed for apprentices caught mid-training and that extensions are also being considered for the Canadian Apprenticeship Loan (CAL).

We would like to pass along the following information based on questions we have been receiving along with updated information and latest developments.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to those of the flu and common cold: cough, sneezing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing.

What should you do if you suspect you are ill with COVID-19?

If you are sick, stay home. If you are at work and feel unwell report to the First Aid officer and/or Supervisor immediately. Your case details will be documented, and you may be assessed along with any other appropriate measures that may be necessary. If they suspect you are infected, you will not be directed back to work. Call your primary doctor or contact 8-1-1 (HealthLinkBC). Your doctor will determine any treatment protocol and whether you should get tested for COVID-19.

Employment Insurance for COVID-19 Quarantine

On March 11, the federal government announced changes to EI Sickness benefits in light of the COVID outbreak. Under normal circumstances, if a worker qualifies for EI Sickness benefits, they have a one week waiting period (unpaid) before their payments begin. The federal government has waived the waiting period for people who are quarantined due to COVID-19. This gives eligible employees the ability to receive EI benefits from the entire 14-day quarantine period.

You may qualify for EI Sickness benefits for COVID-19 quarantine if you:

- are employed and pay EI premiums
- have lost at least 40% of your usual weekly pay
- have worked a minimum of 600 hours in the year before the claim or since your last claim, and
- cannot work due to COVID-19 quarantine imposed by law or by a public health official, or your employer asks you to self-isolate when public health officials recommend it*

*Please note that if you choose to travel despite the travel restriction recommendations imposed by BC health officials on March 12, you are required to quarantine for 14 days upon your return.

The current EI sickness benefit is 55% of your earnings up to a maximum of \$573 per week. If you qualify for and receive EI sick benefits – you will also qualify for **SUB benefits (additional \$100 per week)** if you have funds available in your SUB bank.

Please visit the Employment and Social Development Canada website for further information:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html>

or contact the dedicated toll-free number that has been set up to address questions about the waiving of the one week waiting period for EI. **1-833-381-2725**.

COVID-19 and the workplace

Under BC's Occupational Health and Safety laws, you can refuse unsafe work if you have reasonable cause to believe that performing the work will cause undue harm to your health and safety, or that of another person (OHS Regulation, Section 3-12). You should report any unsafe condition to your employer and the employer is obligated to investigate and address the situation.

The employer must take all reasonable preventative measures to protect workers from work-related hazards, including any infectious disease that may be found in the workplace which may pose a risk to workers.

For those members who are working at Parkland, we have attached their most recent Health and Safety Communication regarding COVID-19.

Travel outside of Canada

On March 12, 2020, The BC Centre for Disease Control recommended against all non-essential travel outside of Canada, including to the United States. Please be advised that your travel medical insurance may not be valid if you choose to ignore the travel restrictions. Please contact the Local 170 Health and Welfare office (604-526-3434) for specific details of what is and what is not covered.

We will provide further updates in the coming days. Again, please follow the recommendations of the provincial health officers, including self-isolation, if warranted. I know this will cause hardship in the short-term, but we need to consider the health and safety of our membership, our families and of the entire community, particularly the elderly and those who are most vulnerable. We are here to offer assistance, so if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Local Union office at 604-526-0441 and speak to your Union rep.

Fraternally,



A.D. Al Phillips, RSE
Business Manager & Financial Secretary

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