

UA 516 Business Manager Update for April 7, 2020

Dear Brothers & Sisters:

We are working hard to keep you up to date with the latest news and suggestions for safe work practices as we receive them.

HVAC-R technicians have been deemed an essential service by the BC government. This means that we are all expected to keep working during this time of crisis to ensure our economy and supply chains stay intact. This means going to work in the safest possible ways; please ensure that we are all practicing social distancing along with correct sanitation and safety measures outlined by the federal and provincial health authorities. If you have any concerns or questions about safety on your job sites please do not hesitate to contact us. Reporting of unsafe sites has already helped in the Union's fight to have WCB inspect job sites and to enforce safety measures where needed.

Despite being deemed an essential service, we have experienced a significant amount of layoffs already within our membership. We would ask that if you do experience a layoff, whether you are affected by COVID-19 directly by becoming ill or by a lack of work, please let us know. We need this data to make decisions in the coming weeks that will best benefit the membership as a whole. We may also be able to help you get access to the proper EI or relief benefit. The most efficient way to let us know you are out of work is to send an email to info@ua516.org. Please provide us your name, where you are working, the date of lay off and how long your employer is expecting the layoff to last. We have been luckier than some industries and have seen around a 5% unemployment rate since March 1st.

We have fielded many calls regarding assistance to both our members and contractors. Currently we are working with our sister locals; UA Local 324 in Victoria, and UA Local 170 in Delta on contingency and support plans for members and their families. There is no word yet on what these programs will look like, how they would work, or when they would be deployed. We are in the very early stages of research and assessment. The economic effects have been very real, and a real concern for our Local is to keep an eye further down the road when the full economic effect becomes apparent. We are an hourly based system, therefore contributions to the Local rise and fall based on hours worked. Protecting your health and welfare and retirement savings plans has been paramount for your trustees during this pandemic, and reports will be sent out as we receive them from Canada Life.

The union hall is still fully functional with the exception being that we are not accepting any in-person meetings or gatherings at this time. We will continue to monitor the public gathering restrictions put in place by the BC government regarding reopening. In the meantime, do not hesitate to call or email for assistance as usual.

While BC seems to be doing a good job of flattening the curve, I would like to encourage all members to show good discipline this long weekend. Please practice all the good safety protocols, try and stay home and enjoy your families this Easter holiday. I would like to remind everyone to stay as optimistic as we can through these troubling times.

Fraternally,
Jason Amesbury
Business Manager
UA Local 516

