

September 17, 2012

CLIFF: 942969

FILE: 51540-02

To: All First Responders in BC

Subject: First Responders and Flu Immunization

There have been questions raised regarding the provincial government's recently-initiated health care worker influenza prevention policy and whether it applies to first responders in B.C.

The policy states that this year, all British Columbia health authorities must take steps to further protect vulnerable patients from influenza. These measures include either receiving influenza vaccination (the preferred option) or wearing a mask during flu season. The policy applies to all health authority staff (unionized and excluded), volunteers, paramedics, students, contractors and physicians who have contact with patients. However, first responders are not explicitly identified.

Being on the front lines of health care provision, we have a fundamental duty and ethical responsibility to provide safe care to our patients, and we know the most effective method of protection against influenza infection remains vaccination. As in past influenza immunization campaigns, we encourage everyone providing direct care to patients, including first responders, receive the immunization.

In the best interests of patient safety and in recognition of the significant immunization rates by first responders in previous years, the Emergency and Health Services Commission and the Provincial Health Officer strongly recommend that all first responders in British Columbia are immunized this fall.

For more information regarding the immunization program for health care professionals, please visit <http://immunizebc.ca/healthcare-professionals>.

Thank you for your commitment to supporting pre-hospital patient care in communities throughout British Columbia.



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