



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

PLEASE POST

HEU members take forest fires in stride, moving seniors to safer locations

A number of Okanagan HEU members have taken some exceptional duties and responsibilities in stride over the last few weeks as raging forest fires have threatened the health and safety of seniors in two residential care facilities.

The Mount McLean (Lillooet) and Glenrosa/West Kelowna fires have come dangerously close to Mountain View Lodge, the extended care unit at Lillooet District Hospital, and Kelowna's Brookhaven Care Centre, causing the complete evacuations of those who live and work at the two facilities.

Not only did HEU members move the residents – many of whom have complex care needs and were anxious and disoriented – quickly, safely and conscientiously to the temporary beds, most accepted re-deployment and stayed, or are staying with their charges.

When the town of Lillooet was evacuated earlier this week, off-shift members showed up at the hospital to assist in any way they could. When several long-term care residents were transferred to Kamloops by ambulance, workers and their families followed right behind in their own vehicles so that they would be at Ponderosa Lodge to help the seniors settle in. The familiar faces of caregivers eased the fear and uncertainty of an unfamiliar setting.

Interior Health Authority (IHA) senior officials have praised the workers and thanked them for their dedication and professionalism in tense and extraordinary circumstances. In an IHA news release on July 24, the director residential services said, "Staff at both Brookhaven and Cottonwoods should be applauded. Everyone jumped in and willingly took care of anything that needed doing, and with a smile."

Over the last few days, more than 20 Mountain View Lodge seniors have been relocated to Ponderosa Lodge in Kamloops, and in mid-July, 104 seniors from Brookhaven went to Cottonwoods, the extended care unit at Kelowna General Hospital.

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