

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

FROM THE DESK OF GENERAL PRESIDENT

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER



All,

As you are doing your work with affiliates in the field, I want you to know how the IAFF offices in Washington, DC and Ottawa will be operating during these challenging times. Please see the email below to all IAFF staff.

As you are all aware, reducing the spread of COVID-19 is proving to be a challenge that we all face -- and have to do our part. To that end, I want you to know that the safety and health of our employees is our number one concern as we face this challenge together as an organization.

Again today, I met with our senior staff in the office at HQ to discuss the latest CDC and federal government guidance that has been released. We have assessed that guidance and are refining our decisions daily about keeping our offices open.

As most of you know from meetings with your supervisors, today our offices are open with a significantly reduced number of staff in the office – all others are teleworking. That is being done to reduce the number of people you come into close contact with through the day.

Over the course of the next few days, we will further reduce the number of staff in the office in both D.C. and Ottawa for health and safety reasons, moving toward a controlled shutdown. While we have not yet determined a date for a possible shutdown, we believe that CDC guidelines and federal government decisions will force a closure of the office in the next few days. If/when that occurs, we will continue our work remotely (all decisions on office closures/reduced staff in the office apply to both the U.S. and Canadian offices). That's why we are moving quickly to enable all of you who can to work remotely so we can continue the work of our union. We will update you as soon as a decision on a closure is made. Until then, our goal is to limit the need for anyone to come to the office as further restrictions are made on all of us to help contain the pandemic.

It's important for all of you to know that, true to our union principles, our staff will not lose any pay or have to take any leave for the interruptions to our operations caused by our response to COVID-19.

If we close, those who can work remotely will telework and will participate in the basic accountability program that all supervisors are supposed to be putting in place. That accountability plan is simple and straight forward:

1. Participate in a call with your supervisor first thing in the morning to discuss issues and set work expectations for the day;

2. Be responsive through the day via phone, email, text, messaging and a team site (team sites are being developed);
3. Provide your supervisor with an email at the end of the day that covers work completed, in progress and any issues that arose during the day.

Those who aren't able to telework because their job requires or is limited to work onsite at the office, please talk to your supervisor about potential ways to adjust that work so it can be done remotely. Regardless of the outcome of any work adjustments, again, no employee will be charged leave or lose pay for a closure or reduction of office operations due to our response to COVID-19.

As you all know, things are changing rapidly. It is important that our affiliates and members do not experience a reduction in service as our staff are teleworking. All divisions will be routing phone calls to ensure they get answered. If you have any issues accessing the tools you need to do your work, please talk with your supervisor immediately.

In the event of an office closure, we will need all of you to encourage affiliates/leaders to email communications to us rather than use USPS or Canada Post (for issues like Guardian, Constitution & Bylaws, training requests, etc.), so that everything is received, logged and responded to in a timely fashion. That decision on closure could be made for us by the federal government pretty quickly, so it's best to start encouraging them now (when communicating with them) to use email for things they otherwise would route through traditional mail – including keeping DVPs in the loop when they send something to HQ.

For all IAFF events, we will be cancelling/postponing all events for the next eight weeks (and will continue to reassess as we move forward). If you work on any of our events/seminars/trainings, please talk with your supervisor about the guidance you should be providing to our affiliates.

We have been discussing many of these issues with OPEIU Local 2 representatives and will continue our open dialogue with them. If you have any questions or concerns, please raise them with your supervisor, HR or Local 2 representative.

Stay safe,



Harold A. Schaitberger
General President