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December 13, 2024

Dear Members,

Re: Knife-Wielding Assailant Attacks Paramedic

In the early hours of December 10th, a paramedic working at the Kelowna ambulance station was attacked by an assailant brandishing a knife. If not for the defensive measures of the paramedic (using a wash brush to keep distance between himself and the knife-wielding attacker) and his de-escalating tactics, this paramedic could have been seriously harmed, injured or even killed.

There have been multiple other incidents at this station and surroundings stations, including a pipe attack, fires being set, homeless encampments in the parking lot, verbal and physical threats, as well as a BCEHS Manager being attacked in the parking lot.

Violence against paramedics, whether physical, verbal, or sexual is on the rise, and we are demanding BCEHS, PHSA and the Government act NOW to address these long-standing issues.

A vast majority of this province's ambulance stations are old, in need of significant repair, are unsafe for members, or have not kept up with the increased demand for our workload and staff. There is a serious need for urgent support to improve these ambulance stations immediately. These are not new issues and have been reported for years with no action.

To date, BCEHS has continually passed the buck and refused to take appropriate measures regarding the safety of our paramedics across this province. The Ambulance Paramedics of BC's Safety Director, numerous frontline paramedics, and supervisors continue to bring these issues up, without appropriate action being taken. The excuses are piling up from the baseline managers, all the way to the executive directors. Quite frankly, we have had enough.

The Ambulance Paramedics of BC is reminding all members that we have zero tolerance for violence in the workplace, and that all incidents, no matter how small, must be reported through the pre-existing channels. We encourage you to contact WSBC immediately with your concerns.

Most importantly, we remind all paramedics that your safety is our number one concern, whether you are on a call, on a break, or at the station. There is nothing more important than promoting a safe working environment, especially from violent assaults such as this most recent one in Kelowna.

Sincerely,

Jason Jackson
President
Ambulance Paramedics & Emergency Dispatchers of BC
CUPE Local 873

JJ/sd/MoveUp