



Yukon Workers'
Compensation
Health and
Safety Board

For Release

March 24, 2011

Amendment to the *Workers' Compensation Act* to include presumptive legislation for Yukon firefighters

WHITEHORSE: Bill 95 an Act to amend the *Workers' Compensation Act* was approved in the Yukon Legislative Assembly on this date.

The Bill adds special presumptive provisions for current and former firefighters, effective July 1, 2011. Presumptive provisions mean the usual YWCHSB determination of whether an injury/illness is work-related is not required in special "presumptive" circumstances.

All Yukon firefighters (full-time, part-time, volunteer and wild land firefighters) will be included in a presumption for cardiac arrest within 24-hours of fighting a fire. Yukon becomes the only jurisdiction in the country to apply this presumptive legislation for wild land firefighters.

Presumptive legislation is also provided for full-time firefighters who contract specified primary cancers demonstrated to be caused by cumulative fire fighting activities.

The Bill also contains a provision that allows the Commissioner in Executive Council to add to the listed primary cancers as new evidence is obtained. Presumption on any added primary cancers will be retroactive to July 1, 2011.

The YWCHSB Board of Directors is developing the latency periods for which the presumptive legislation will apply for primary cancers.

Improved OH&S regulations have also been prepared to better protect full-time firefighters from developing occupational cancers or cardiac arrest. It's planned to have these draft regulations approved by July 1, 2011.

Presumption for the specified primary cancers will be effective for volunteer and part-time firefighters no later than three years from the date of the ascent of this bill, retroactive to July 1, 2011. This time is required to assess historical information on volunteer firefighter activities to determine how the presumptive legislation, with respect to primary cancers, will apply to them.

Improved prevention regulations for volunteer and part-time firefighters will be developed in conjunction with the effective date of their cancer presumption.

Yukon joins eight other Canadian jurisdictions that have also enacted presumptive legislation for firefighters.

Don McKnight of the International Association of Firefighters Local 2217 Whitehorse stated, "Acknowledging that certain cancers and cardiac arrest in firefighters will be considered work related means a lot to firefighters and their families. Should they be faced with one of these situations, they can feel some comfort knowing that they and their family will have the support of their government and YWCHSB."

"The Yukon Government is commended for moving forward with the presumptive cancer legislation for all fire service personnel. This legislation will result in these valuable first responders being provided with coverage for cancers associated with firefighting related duties", said Jim Regimbal, the President of the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs.

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