

For Immediate Release | August 24, 2020

Interior Health operations return to normal in Penticton

PENTICTON – Normal operations are resuming at local health sites as the Christie Mountain wildfire evacuation alerts are lifted.

Special precautions had been implemented last week in response to the wildfire that threatened properties in the South Okanagan. As the wildfire threat dissipates, Interior Health (IH) services will begin returning to normal.

“Evacuations and alerts are stressful for everyone impacted by wildfires and this year, COVID-19 makes our planning even more complex and challenging to navigate,” said Susan Brown, President and Chief Executive Officer, Interior Health. “Thank you to everyone in the community for coming together to support one another and to all of our incredible staff and physicians who put precautionary measures in place to ensure we were prepared for the worst.”

Interior Health’s internal emergency operation centre is monitoring all wildfire threats to health facilities and services. Health authority officials work closely with representatives of the municipalities, regional districts, and the BC WildFire Service to ensure precautions are underway to protect patients, clients, and residents.

In response to the Christie Mountain wildfire, IH implemented a wide range of precautions, including:

- Nearby hospitals throughout the region underwent significant efforts to reduce their capacity to ensure in-patients could be absorbed from Penticton Regional Hospital (PRH) if needed.
- Intensive care unit (ICU) patients from PRH were transferred to Kelowna General Hospital to ensure their care seamlessly continued.
- Alternate locations were identified for 513 people living in IH and private long-term care homes in the event they were required to evacuate.
- An IH public information service was established to keep families and loved ones informed of transfers.
- IH proactively connected with mental health and substance use and Home Health and dialysis clients living within the evacuation alert zone to provide support for relocation.
- Surgical procedures requiring overnight stay were rescheduled and replaced with day procedures to reduce hospital capacity.
- Clients from Braemore Lodge were relocated from within the evacuation zone and will return to Penticton in the coming days.

Interior Health thanks the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, the City of Penticton and the BC Wildfire Service for their support in response to the Christie Mountain wildfire.

We also remind everyone to consider that power outages and fire retardants may have affected water quality and food safety.

Information about returning home after a wildfire is available here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/preparedbc/know-your-hazards/wildfires/after-wildfire#re-entry>

Information about food safety when returning from wildfire evacuation is available here:
https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/Emergency/Wildfires/Documents/HP-FS-9055_Food%20Safety%20for%20Homeowners.pdf

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