

Backgrounder: Fire Fighter Opinion On Pandemic Preparedness In Canada

Methodology

A total of 1,712 online surveys were completed among full-time professional members of the International Association for Fire Fighters (IAFF) by Harris/Decima from April 30, 2009 to May 15, 2009 to determine their levels of concern about a potential influenza pandemic and to gauge their expectations for emergency first responder pandemic protection in Canada.

Canada's professional fire fighters believe they should be better protected against an influenza pandemic

One hundred per cent of professional fire fighters think it is important to ensure firefighters are protected against the threat of an influenza pandemic

Ninety-six per cent believe fire fighters are at a higher risk for infection compared to the population in general

- In fact, 67 per cent think fire fighters are at a significantly higher risk

Because of the nature of their work (e.g., "feet on the street"), 87 per cent are personally concerned about getting infected during a growing influenza pandemic

Ninety-three per cent are concerned about the ease of transmission of the virus from person to person

While almost all professional fire fighters are concerned with all of the workplace health and safety issues related to dealing with a pandemic, 95 per cent are concerned with dealing directly with someone who is infected with the influenza pandemic

- In fact, 65 per cent are very concerned

Ninety-two per cent also are concerned about unknowingly spreading it to family and friends

Professional fire fighters are concerned about the risks and impact to the general population

Eighty-four per cent of professional fire fighters are concerned about the risk to the general population during a growing influenza pandemic in Canada

Seventy-six per cent believe the impact on loss of life could be serious

Eighty-four per cent believe the impact on social issues could be serious

Eighty-five per cent believe the impact on the economy could be serious

Canada's professional fire fighters do not believe measures are being put in place to both treat and protect fire fighters from an influenza pandemic

Sixty-nine per cent do not believe measures are being put in place by the government to protect and treat all professional fire fighters from an influenza pandemic

Ninety-eight per cent believe protection from and treatment for an influenza pandemic should be a priority for fire fighters

Overwhelmingly, professional fire fighters believe the government should take all precautions necessary to first protect all emergency first responders and front line healthcare workers during an influenza pandemic

Ninety-nine per cent believe this

Professional fire fighters believe the following combined precautions should be taken to mitigate the risk of first responders becoming infected

- Protective equipment (100 per cent)
- Detailed hygiene procedures (99 per cent)
- P100 masks (98 per cent)
- Quarantine measures (95 per cent)
- Antiviral medications (93 per cent)
- Flu vaccines (89 per cent)

When it comes to antiviral medications for the prevention of illness, professional firefighters say government should give priority use for prevention to firefighters and other critical care occupations

Ninety-five per cent believe specific occupations such as first responders, physicians and nurses should be given priority for antiviral medication during an influenza pandemic

Ninety-eight per cent believe it should be made available for treatment once they exhibit symptoms, and 94 per cent believe it should be made available as outbreak prevention

Eighty per cent disagree with the current government's approach to pandemic planning (which does not prioritize the use of antivirals to prevent illness among emergency first responders during an influenza pandemic)

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