



UNITED FIRE FIGHTERS OF WINNIPEG
LOCAL 867-INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS
303-83 GARRY STREET WINNIPEG MB R3C 4J9
PHONE 204-783-1733 FAX 204-772-2531
uffw.ca. uffw@mts.net



JULY 22nd, 2019
NOTICE TO THE MEMBERS

RE: RESPONDING TO VIOLENT CALLS

Over the last year we have seen a big change in the nature of the calls we are being dispatched to. We are seeing weekly examples of our members being assaulted or dispatched to calls that needlessly put them in harm's way, and many of these calls are neither medical nor fire/rescue emergencies, but primarily calls for police assistance or investigation.

This must stop.

We have now met numerous times with the police, fire and dispatch administrations, and although this has led to some changes to dispatch protocols, it is not enough.

Unfortunately, our meetings have led us to believe that the leadership of the Winnipeg Police Department does not take our concerns seriously. The police have to stop using our brothers and sisters of the UFFW as a convenient extension of their own department to investigate situations. We understand that they are understaffed and stretched thin, and no one can deny the incredibly hard job they do in keeping our streets safe. Our issue is not with the front line, but with their current leadership.

Our resources are being used inappropriately and we will be bringing our concerns and examples of actual violent calls forward once again at our next labour management meeting. If the current method of dispatching calls does not change, it is only a matter of time before one of our members is severely injured or worse, killed.

We ask all members of UFFW to continue to advise us of any violence or near miss incidents experienced on calls as we continue to record these incidents to be used as further proof to our administration.

Please send communication to either one of our executives assigned to compile research: Derek Balcaen (dbalcaen@uffw.ca) or Tom Bilous (tbilous@uffw.ca).

We are consulting with locals across Canada and the United States to educate ourselves on best practices, but are learning that we are dealing with nearly unprecedented levels of violence and danger on our calls.

While we work towards new policies and training to make our calls safer, (situational awareness, de-escalation, avoidance etc), we encourage our members to consider a fundamental change when responding putting greater emphasis on having safety as a priority over unnecessary risk.

The responsibility remains with the officer to know when to stage until police support ensures the scene is safe.

In Solidarity,

Alex Forrest, President
United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg