

Stabilizing paramedic staffing in rural and remote British Columbia *Introducing a more stable paramedic workforce to serve our patients*

Frequently Asked Questions

BC Emergency Health Services is introducing a new paramedic staffing model in rural and remote communities of British Columbia. The new staffing model is called Scheduled On-Call (SOC) and it aims to provide rural and remote communities with:

- Permanent paramedic positions, with guaranteed wages and full health benefits.
- More consistent emergency coverage and enhanced community services.
- Improved paramedic recruitment and retention.

Why is a new model being introduced?

Historically, BCEHS has relied on 'on-call' staffing to maintain ambulance service in small communities, and that is changing. The on-call model relies on the availability of paramedics to work around other commitments, without a guarantee of regular pay. Without a regular, predictable income it is difficult to retain and attract paramedics in smaller communities.

As part of the 2019-2022 Collective Agreement with the Ambulance Paramedics and Dispatchers Association of BC, a number of initiatives were agreed upon to create permanent, salaried jobs for paramedics, including the SOC staffing model.

What is this new model?

Scheduled On-Call is a model developed to provide regular, sustainable paramedic work where 911 call volumes are low. Paramedics will be provided eight hours per day of pay and assigned work which may include [community paramedicine](#) work, 911 emergency response or other duties. On their workdays, the paramedics will respond to patients with medical emergencies during scheduled work hours and will also be scheduled to be 'on call' for emergency response in their community for the remainder of their shift.

Are other positions being added in addition to the SOC positions?

Yes. As part of the collective agreement, hundreds of permanent paramedic positions are being created as BCEHS gradually ends the practice of standby staffing (known as Fox shifts) and will also result in the conversion of temporary ambulance placements (known as "Juliet" units) to permanent positions in some communities. These permanent ambulance resources will be staffed by regular full-time or regular part-time paramedic positions. In addition to 220 SOC positions, and other new positions in dispatch, another 270 new full-time paramedic positions are being created for a total of more than 500 new positions across the province.

How do these changes impact our community and our community paramedics (CPs)?

In many communities, the introduction of SOC will either not affect the work of CPs or it will increase the availability of community paramedic services. In fact, the implementation of this SOC model will see a 25 per cent increase of total full-time hours devoted to the program provincially, through new CP positions and increased hours. This introduction of regularized, permanent paramedic roles across the province sets the stage for BCEHS to expand services including community-based health care support and emergency coverage.

When is this happening?

The transition to this new staffing model is being implemented in phases during 2021. Positions for the first phase, involving 21 stations on Vancouver Island, will be in place by the summer. Another 66 stations across the rest of the province are expected to be completed by late 2021. Overall, the SOC model will be creating more than 220 regular positions in rural and remote communities as part of more than 500 new positions in B.C.

For more information on these changes, contact: MyCommunity@bcehs.ca
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