

10/28/2019,

Good morning! I hope this email finds each of you rested and feeling well. I'm including a lot of information here...please take the time to read it.

You've probably heard by now that the fire is not expected to be fully extinguished until November 9th or 10th. This will make smoke related issues a problem for much longer than we'd like, but in order to extinguish it properly there is a method to doing it that can take quite a while. There were issues upon returning to work on Friday, new reports of illnesses as well as reports of worsening symptoms from previous smoke related illnesses. Please continue to use your best judgement as to whether or not you should even be near the smoke, and stay in contact with your admin if you aren't feeling well while at work. Please keep a close eye on your students, as well, because they may not be aware of the symptoms to look for, and which ones should be taken seriously.

You can follow the fire information closely at <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/6651>. Thank you to everyone who attended our last minute meeting with Congressman Raul Ruiz on Saturday night...there were over 40 of you there!

What has CVTA been doing?

CVTA leaders have been talking to many people and have attended many meetings regarding this fire. We have discussed the issues with: CVUSD administration and School Board Members, Congressman Raul Ruiz, representatives from Senator Bernie Sanders' office, the media, leadership from the Torres-Martinez tribe, CTA, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and their firefighters, Comite Civico Del Valle, Desert Healthcare District board, Assemblyman Eduardo Garcia, representatives from Supervisor Perez's office, other local union leadership, and probably more that I am forgetting. We are making certain that your voice is heard in these meetings and discussions, as well as looking for ways that we, CVTA Members, can help.

What we can do right now is support the Torres-Martinez tribe and our community through emails to the appropriate agencies and applying political pressure where we can. Right now we have been asked to continue emailing our fire related experiences, including photos where appropriate, to the EPA at sakow.rick@epa.gov (Rick Sakow, Inspector). Email the same things to BIA PIO (Public Information Officer) Robyn Broyles at robyn.broyles@bia.gov or at 2019.martinez3@firenet.gov. Please cc Congressman Raul Ruiz on your emails to the EPA or the BIA through his Field Representative Peter Carlstrom peter.carlstrom@mail.house.gov and his Communications Director Hernán Quintas hernan.quintas@mail.house.gov.

One other thing you can do is to attend the CVUSD Board Meeting on 11/7 at the DO Board Room. Let them know how you were affected by them not closing schools on 10/15, 10/16, and 10/17 when the fire was at its worst, and about opening up on 10/25

(and any days coming up) where the smoke was still causing health issues. They need to hear from each of you about their policies and decision making practices around this issue. We will remind you about this meeting in the next email as well.

Do we have to make up the days missed?

I will share that District leadership has not discussed this with CVTA at all, although we have reached out more than once to ask if they are filing for a waiver or if they plan to discuss this issue with us at some point. We plan to address our members' needs while also making sure our students are not deprived of an education.

If the District files for a waiver and is approved, we will not need to make up the days due to the emergency caused by the fire and the smoke. If for some reason the District is not approved for a waiver, we would need to make up the days since the law states students must attend school for 180 days and we were closed for 5 days. How that would happen would need to be negotiated. The District cannot decide on their own where to add time, and they cannot dock your pay, without negotiating any changes with CVTA. Please know that nothing will be decided without each of you knowing about it and having an opportunity to provide input.

Workers Compensation Information

For those of you who have or will file a workers comp claim regarding smoke inhalation injuries, we are fully aware that you are being told they will be denied because "it isn't the District's fire." This statement is ridiculous, as any injury that occurs while at work is a work related injury, regardless of the District's fault. Additionally, District personnel should not be the ones telling you your claim will be denied. An actual denial needs to come from Keenan and Associates, and it needs to be in writing. You have the right to appeal it, and you absolutely should. In the meantime, you will need to use your own sick leave if you need to be out. Please check with your disability insurance, if you have it, because that may kick in if applicable.

CVTA will not handle your workers compensation issues for you, as it does not fall within our purview to handle. We can offer advice, but cannot file claims or appeals for you. However, we have consulted an attorney on your behalf due to the sheer number of members affected by the smoke. His advice was to do two things: 1) gather information from each person filing a claim, because he would like to know how many there are, and I do not have access to that information through the District, and 2) hire a certified industrial hygienist to complete an air quality test specifically looking for toxins in the smoke (and which ones), and not just to find out if it is within "acceptable" limits for us to breathe while at work. We are working on this.

If you have filed or plan to file claim, please send me (or your site rep) the following information:

- Your full name and site
- Phone number
- Symptoms
- Did you see a doctor? Your own or through the District?
- What did the doctor tell you about your symptoms?
- Have you received a denial of your claim?

For those who do not plan to file a claim...

This is worth repeating...if you used any of your own sick time due to smoke related illnesses, we believe you are within your rights to file a grievance to get that time back (this is if you do not plan to file it as a work injury...in the case of an approved IA, your sick day would likely be converted later on). Visit our website at www.mycvta.org for grievance forms, sample forms, and the contract. You'd file using Article 13.1, which states that you should not be required to work under conditions which could be dangerous to your health.

Here are a few other items to share with you...

PBIS Resources

Don't forget about this great website... www.PBISworld.com. You can literally search for strategies to use for particular classroom behaviors, and there are tiered intervention suggestions and data tracking forms available. Take the time to check it out...it's very helpful!

Bargaining Information

MA, LP, CC, OA, PP, VDS, SM and VV site visits have been or are being rescheduled due to the District closures. Please see the dates below for your bargaining site visits with bargaining team members and board members. This is another optional opportunity to share what you'd like to see bargained.

Site Visits this week: MA, PP, SM, CC, and OA (see below for specifics)

Contractual Issues Happening Right Now

[Find the contract here](#). Here are the things we are working on:

- Grievances need to start at the informal level. This means that you have a conversation with your immediate supervisor, whether face to face or via email, in order to give them the opportunity to remedy the situation. It is important that you actually state, "This is my informal grievance." This will begin the timeline, and will ensure your administrator understands that there is a timeline to follow. Sample grievance forms can be found on our website at www.mycvta.org under Documents. The Uniform Complaint Form can be found there as well.

- [Williams Complaint Form](#) - This form could be an option when a grievance isn't the appropriate path to deal with a situation at your site.

Here are some important dates to keep in mind:

- **October 29th** - MA Bargaining visit 7:30 am
- **October 29th** - OA Bargaining visit 3:20 pm
- **October 29th** - Special Ed for Gen Ed Teachers PD 4:30 (only for those already registered)
- **October 29th** - Middle School Conferences
- **October 30th** - High School Conferences
- **October 30th** - PP Bargaining Visit 7:30am
- **October 30th** - SM Bargaining Visit 3:20 pm
- **November 1st** - Minimum Day for High Schools and Middle Schools only
- **November 1st** - CC Bargaining Visit 7:30 am
- **November 5th** - VDS Bargaining Visit 3:20 pm
- **November 6th** - CVTA Rep Council Mtg., 4:30 @ CDA Library
- **November 7th** - CVUSD School Board Mtg, 5:30 @ DO Board Room
- **November 11th** - Veteran's Day Holiday
- **November 20th** - CVTA Exec Board meeting 4:00 @ CVTA office

[Click here to find an archive of our weekly emails.](#)

Carissa Carrera
CVTA President

"You can't do it unless you organize."