How HR Managers Can Support Employees Under Evacuation Notice from Wildfire Threats in Canada



As wildfires become increasingly frequent and severe across Canada, human resources (HR) professionals play a vital role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of employees affected by these disasters. When employees receive an evacuation notice due to wildfire threats, HR managers must act swiftly and compassionately. Here's how they can provide meaningful support.

1. Prioritize Safety and Communication

HR should immediately establish clear lines of communication. Use email, text, and internal messaging platforms to check in with affected employees, provide updates, and ensure they have the information they need about company policies related to emergency leave, pay, and resources.

2. Offer Flexible Work Arrangements

For those in evacuation zones or caring for evacuated family members, HR can facilitate remote work options or adjust schedules to accommodate the disruption. If remote work isn't feasible, HR should ensure employees have access to paid leave or disaster relief leave where possible.

3. Provide Access to Emergency Resources

Connect employees with emergency services such as the Canadian Red Cross, local shelters, and government evacuation centres. HR can also collaborate with benefits providers to offer emergency counselling and mental health support through Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

4. Support Financial and Logistical Needs

Companies can consider offering emergency grants, advances on pay, or temporary housing stipends. HR can also organize donation drives or coordinate employee assistance funds to support those directly affected.

5. Prepare a Long-Term Response Plan

HR managers should work with leadership (internal managers or external resources) to develop or refine emergency response plans that include wildfire-specific contingencies. Regular training and simulations can prepare teams to act quickly when threats arise.

By acting with empathy and preparedness, HR managers can make a significant difference in how employees cope with wildfire emergencies—ensuring they feel supported, valued, and safe during times of crisis.