



SERVICE INTERRUPTION REASONS

Service interruptions occur when there is an unexpected or unavoidable impact on Northern Health's ability to maintain or offer certain services, and the reasons why they occur, can vary. Northern Health makes every effort to prevent service interruptions in advance, and to limit the impact on patient care when they do unfortunately occur.



What is a service interruption, and why do they happen?

Examples of interruptions include an emergency department needing to temporarily redirect patients to another facility (sometimes referred to as 'diversion'), or changes to a laboratory, medical imaging department, or medical clinic's hours of operation.

While service interruptions can be due to ongoing shortages of skilled staff across the health care sector, they can also have other causes; from unexpected or unavoidable staff absences, to supply chain issues, to (especially in the case of emergency departments) a sudden increase in patients with emergency care needs that temporarily puts a facility and its staff at maximum capacity.

How are communities informed about service interruptions?

We make every effort to keep communities informed about changes to regular services, and when we know in advance of the potential for intermittent service interruptions.

When the cause of a service interruption is sudden or unexpected, or it occurs after hours, it is challenging to provide notifications in real time. For example, an emergency department service interruption can happen on short notice if multiple trauma patients arrive at one time; but services can also return to normal on short notice, as patients are treated and transferred, or as more staff resources arrive.

Our priority in keeping community members informed is making sure they know how to access care, even if intermittent service interruptions are happening - and especially for life-threatening emergency care needs.

What is Northern Health doing to reduce the frequency of service interruptions?

We recognize that access to services, whether it's primary care, emergency and acute care, or laboratory and medical imaging services is of utmost importance to the communities we serve. We also know that staffing shortages and recruitment and retention challenges are not unique to the Northern Health region.

With the support of the Ministry of Health, and in collaboration with partners including Divisions of Family Practice, post secondary institutions and community stakeholders, NH is working hard to attract and retain the skilled health professionals needed to maintain and improve services in Northern BC.