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STATE COMPENSATION INSURANCE FUND'S NEW POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, ASSEMBLY BILL 664 AND SENATE BILL 1159 ALL PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

BY: SCOTT A. O'MARA

State Compensation Insurance Fund (SCIF) has issued support for policyholders' workers impacted by COVID-19. On April 17, 2020, SCIF announced their plan to support these workers. Specifically, this plan includes:

Effective immediately, accenting any claim by an essential worker — as defined by Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-33-20 — for a diagnosed case of COVID-19 regardless of whether or not that worker can demonstrate the virus was contracted during the course of employment. The diagnosis must include a confirmed positive test for COVID-19 and must occur during the period of time between when the Governor issued his stay-at-home order and before that order is lifted. This action effectively replaces the Essential Worker Support Fund announced earlier this week as all employees who would have been covered under that fund are now entitled to full workers' compensation benefits.

The proactive role which SCIF has taken is a necessity to protect essential workers. This enactment by SCIF provides strong direction as to the necessity our society has to protect our essential workers.

As readers are aware, new legislation — Assembly Bill 664 — has been introduced by Assembly members Cooper, Gonzalez and Bonta to protect California firefighters, peace officers and health care workers during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. As stated by Assembly member Jim Cooper:

Every day our first responders and healthcare workers are on the frontlines fighting to keep us safe and healthy. These workers not only show up to protect us, but they are asked to go toward the risk while most of us are asked to stay away from it. They are heroes and should have the peace of mind that they will be taken care of if they fall ill while providing their vital services to the public.

The protection which society needs constitutes not only payment to essential workers for their time off work, but also payment for any medical care which is needed to cure or relieve the effects of their injuries. State Compensation Insurance Fund's support of policyholders' workers will entitle these people to full Workers' Compensation benefits.

Assembly Bill 664 encourages workers to be candid regarding their subjective complaints and access care immediately. Workers are entitled to compensation for the period of time they are quarantined while waiting for a diagnostic work-up as to a positive or negative finding of COVID-

