



**Greater Vancouver
Shelter Strategy**

Metro Vancouver Extreme Weather Response Report and Evaluation 2009-10

Prepared by: James Pratt Consulting
For the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the provision of the Extreme Weather Response across Metro Vancouver, and to support continuous improvement and evolution of EWR programs across Metro Vancouver.

Activities

EWR activities at the community level continued to include service planning and budget development, recruitment and training of volunteers and staff, preparation of site logistics and supplies, fundraising and collection of donated goods, monitoring weather and calling alerts as required, communicating service availability to homeless people and relevant agencies, delivery of overnight shelter and food services, responding to local media inquiries, and collection and reporting of statistics. This past year, implementation of the new *Assistance to Shelter Act* created additional work, particularly in the process of calling and ending alerts.

The GVSS continued to provide sub-regional EWR coordination in Vancouver and Surrey/White Rock, as well as regional coordination covering Burnaby, Langley, New Westminister, the North Shore, Richmond and the Tri-Cities. Coordination and support included: planning support; needs assessment; provision of training; purchasing and distribution of mats; media relations; coordination and information sharing during EWR implementation; post- season debriefing; development of tools and resources – including a multi-media EWR Facilitator/Instructor Manual, and draft Standards for EWR Sheltering Sites.

Inputs

BC Housing provided \$213,849 for operation of EWR sites in 2009-10. In addition, BC Housing provided \$7,000 for purchase of mats. Coordination costs were a total of \$84,800. The EWR program continued to rely heavily on in kind contributions.

Outputs

Communities across Metro Vancouver provided a grand total of 2,637 person-nights of EWR service in 2009-10, mostly during the month of December. This was significantly lower than the previous year (8,699), mostly due to relatively mild weather in the early months of 2010 and additional low barrier shelter services provided in connection with the 2010 Winter Olympics.

EWR Person Nights by Sub-Region: 2003-04 through 2009-10

Community	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Burnaby				249	787	1,175	13
Langley	13	162	61	118	146	351	113
New Westminster	93	367	346	79	1,396	940	195
North Shore			71	122	416	373	191
Richmond	1	2		36	23	469	204
Surrey / White Rock	23	223	16	523	865	3,006	1,196
Tri-Cities				142	212	236	0
Vancouver	495	1,880	1,613	3,147	1,606	2,149	622
TOTAL	625	2,634	2,107	4,416	5,457	8,699	2,637

Of the 2,637 person-nights of service, 2,261 were used by males (86%) and 376 were used by females (14%). No sites reported transgender clients. Of the total, just 7 were reported as being under 19 years of age (less than 1%).

Nobody was turned away for lack of space, and sites reported a total of just 4 incidences of turning a person away for other reasons.

Outcomes

EWR outcomes included: improved access to emergency shelter during extreme weather, with up to 625 extra emergency shelter spaces available to be opened as needed; reduced risk during extreme weather; improved co-ordination of sheltering services during extreme weather; improved understanding of local and regional needs during extreme weather; increased public awareness of homelessness and Extreme Weather Response.

Recommendations

The 2008-09 EWR Evaluation included 5 recommendations, all of which were implemented.

The evaluator offers 5 new recommendations:

1. Seek funding to develop and implement a coordinated extreme hot weather response;
2. Explore issues of EWR accessibility for people with disabilities, dementia, and other conditions;
3. Continue to strengthen linkages and referral capabilities between Extreme Weather Response sites and local services and resources;
4. Bring Langley and Delta into the Surrey/White Rock EWR sub-region to create a South of Fraser EWR response for each of the involved communities;
5. Review resource requirements to sustain strong regional and sub-regional EWR coordination.

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Acknowledgements

Each year, the Extreme Weather Response (EWR) has been made possible through the commitment and work of literally hundreds of community volunteers and staff members of shelters across Metro Vancouver. Their dedication and nights of lost sleep assist hundreds of homeless people across this region to be safe in shelter during times of extreme weather.

In addition to those who work directly in the shelter sites, there are many people who spend hours planning and preparing for the extreme weather responses in their communities. Many do this work in addition to their regular tasks because of their commitment to helping some of our community's most vulnerable members. Their commitment ensures that the EWRs operate as smoothly as possible.

The extreme weather response has been facilitated with operational funding from BC Housing since 2005 (<http://www.bchousing.org/>). Despite the pressures and complexity of this program, BC Housing has proven their dedication to this area of their portfolio with flexibility and support to all communities involved in the extreme weather response program.

The extreme weather responses across Metro Vancouver are supported through the Extreme Weather Task Group (EWTG) of the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (<http://www.gvss.ca/>). It was the EWTG that originally developed a community planning template, and secured the federal funds to develop extreme weather response plans. The EWTG also provides support and guidance to the consultants who serve as Extreme Weather Response coordinators.

Special thanks to Judy Graves, City of Vancouver, and Peter Fedos, Surrey/White Rock EWR Coordinator for design and delivery of EWR training for site volunteers and staff.

Extreme Weather Task Group Members, 2009-2010

- Peter Fedos, *Surrey EWR Coordinator*
- Grant Gayman, *Vancouver EWR Coordinator*
- Judy Graves, *City of Vancouver*
- Irene Jaakson, *Lookout Emergency Aid Society*
- Allison Jones, *BC Housing*
- Diana Kirady, *BC Housing*
- Karen Miller, *Canadian Red Cross*
- Pastor Norman Oldham, *Urban Core Community Workers' Association*
- Karen O'Shannacery, *Lookout Emergency Aid Society*
- Anthony Owusu, *Salvation Army*
- James Pratt, *Metro Vancouver EWR Coordinator*
- Penny Rogers, *St Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church*
- Jo-Ann Stevens (Chair), *City of Vancouver – the Gathering Place*
- Shayne Williams, *South Fraser Community Services*

Introduction

Purpose and Objectives of Evaluative Report

2009/10 was the seventh season of implementation for the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (GVSS) Extreme Weather Response (EWR) program. EWR Coordination funding this past year came from BC Housing and the Homeless Partnering Strategy of the National Homelessness Initiative.

This is the seventh annual evaluation of the Extreme Weather Response program in Metro Vancouver. Reports from these previous years, beginning in 2003/04, are available on the GVSS website: <http://www.gvss.ca/Other-Docs.html>. This year's report includes information from the eight communities that developed and carried out the Extreme Weather Response shelter planning.

The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the provision of the Extreme Weather Response across Metro Vancouver, and to support continuous improvement and evolution of EWR programs across Metro Vancouver.

The evaluation has four objectives:

1. To provide an overview of the Extreme Weather Response planning and implementation in the 2009-10 season;
2. To identify inputs, outputs and outcomes;
3. To analyze the strengths and challenges of the EWR program;
4. To provide detailed recommendations for consideration in ongoing development of the program.

Scope

This evaluation covers the period from April 2009 through to March 2010. The evaluation includes statistical summaries of EWR services throughout Metro Vancouver during this period. However, the primary focus is on the regional and sub-regional levels and individual EWR site funding and activities are outside the scope.

Analysis of the strengths and challenges contained within this report provide lessons that will enable greater future capacity for service delivery, more efficient delivery of services, and more accurate assessment of needs for consideration in partnerships with funders and participating community organizations.

Methodology

This evaluation was created in collaboration with members of the Extreme Weather Task Group. Research methods were designed to be consistent with the objectives stated above.

The preparation of this report drew upon a number of sources, involving both qualitative and quantitative analysis, including:

- GVSS Extreme Weather Task Group documents, including meeting minutes;
- Service statistics collected and provided by BC Housing;
- Post-season debriefing sessions with local EWR committees.

Overview of Extreme Weather Response in Metro Vancouver

Background

Grassroots and informal extreme weather responses began in and around Metro Vancouver many years ago. For the most part, it was based on individual agencies responding to people standing and lying outside their doors on the coldest winter nights. Over the years, the City of Vancouver joined in and the ability to offer extra shelter sites during cold snaps was noticed in communities across the region.



Surrey, Langley, Richmond, and New Westminister developed EWR plans by 2003, and Vancouver's response was documented. These plans set the framework for expanding community resources for homeless persons during the winter months to prevent hardships from extreme winter weather conditions.

In Richmond, Surrey, Langley, and New Westminister, local steering committees developed the EWR plans. The community members involved in this planning process represented a broad array of organizations and agencies. The Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy, through funding from the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative, assisted in the planning process through the provision of consultant services. In Vancouver, the plan reflected the Extreme Weather Responses already underway, primarily supported through provincial funding.

In 2004-05, the second year of operation, Richmond, Surrey, Langley and New Westminister continued to fine tune their EWR plans and these four communities, as well as Vancouver, implemented their plans. In addition, planning began in the North Shore (District of North Vancouver, City of North Vancouver, and District of West Vancouver), and Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody) as initial discussions on EWR planning started up in Burnaby.

During 2005-06, the North Shore's implemented an EWR Plan. Burnaby and the Tri-Cities both finalized their plans, each with a critical difference: Burnaby required an appropriate shelter site, while the Tri-Cities required an organization that would supervise and schedule volunteer staff for their EWR shelter.

In 2006-07, formal agreements were developed, through EWR policy requirements from BC Housing – developed in consultation with, and input from, the GVSS/EW Task Group. The EWR now had structured funding and supports, and the communities were required to meet BC Housing Policies and Procedures to access funds.

In 2007-08, the GVSS worked with the eight sub-regions to meet BC Housing's policy requirements. In 2009-10 the GVSS worked with BC Housing and the sub-regions to implement the *Assistance to Shelter Act*, and undertook a major revamping of the EWR training manual. It also developed draft standards for EWR sheltering sites.



Map 1: Communities of Metro Vancouver

Purpose and Objectives of the Program

The overall purpose of the EWR is to protect homeless people in Metro Vancouver from contracting a critical illness, becoming hypothermic, or dying due to exposure to extreme winter weather.

The central objectives for the region's EWR have been to:

1. Provide safe and adequate temporary shelter to homeless people during periods of extreme weather;
2. Coordinate community-based collaboration for all aspects of the EWR including shelter and meal provision, transportation, and communication;
3. Coordinate communication among communities implementing EWR;
4. Foster increased public awareness about homelessness in Metro Vancouver and the potential impacts of extreme weather on the homeless;
5. Develop trained volunteers to support the EWR;
6. Increase the sustainability of the EWR through further community development;
7. Provide daily updates during EWR implementation.

Program Logic Model

The following logic model chart shows inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes for the Extreme Weather Response.

Inputs

1. Funding provided by BC Housing and the Government of Canada, Homelessness Partnering Strategy.
2. Planning time given by staff and volunteers from non-profit service agencies, faith groups, municipalities and others with organizational support provided by a contracted consulting firm.
3. Community donations from individuals, corporations, service clubs, faith groups and others.
4. In-kind contributions, including facility space, food, blankets, winter clothing, hygiene kits, and volunteer time.

Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and revision of the eight EWR plans. 2. EWR volunteer training. 3. Coordination of EWR implementation during periods of extreme weather. 4. Statistical tracking through BC Housing. 5. Media relations. 6. Communication among EWR communities. 7. Communication with funders.
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of EWR shelter space nights provided. 2. Number of nights EWR shelters available by community.
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved access to emergency shelter during extreme weather. 2. Reduced risk during extreme weather. 3. Improved co-ordination of sheltering services during extreme weather. 4. Improved understanding of local and regional needs during extreme weather. 5. Increased public awareness of homelessness and extreme weather.

Activities

Activities at the community level continued to include EWR service planning and budget development, recruitment and training of volunteers and staff, preparation of site logistics and supplies, fundraising and collection of donated goods, monitoring weather and calling alerts as required, communicating service availability to homeless people and relevant agencies, delivery of overnight shelter and food services, responding to local media inquiries, collection and reporting of statistics, and end of season debriefing. This past year, implementation of the new *Assistance to Shelter Act* created additional work, particularly in the process of calling and ending alerts.

The GVSS continued to provide sub-regional EWR coordination in Vancouver and Surrey/White Rock, as well as regional coordination covering Burnaby, Langley, New Westminster, the North Shore, Richmond and the Tri-Cities. Coordination and support included:

- ✓ Planning support – assisting each of the eight communities to update their EWR plans and prepare for the coming season;
- ✓ Needs assessment – documenting the needs of each community for training, mats, blankets and other supplies;

- ✓ Provision of training – 3 full-day EWR training sessions delivered in Richmond and Surrey. This training included guidelines for handling conflicts, protocol for ensuring a healthy environment, and guidance on the importance of genuine listening. In addition, the GVSS provided 2 full-day sessions of Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training;
- ✓ Purchasing and distribution of mats - arranging for funding from BC Housing, selecting and ordering mats from Stone Proof in Texas, dealing with the importation process, and arranging for distribution to sites across the region in accord with their expressed needs;
- ✓ Media relations – including wide distribution of a pre-season media briefing document and participation in television, radio and print media interviews and information gathering;
- ✓ Coordination and information sharing during EWR implementation – including preparation and circulation of daily written updates on available services and communication with EWR sites as needed;
- ✓ Post- season debriefing – facilitation of semi-structured dialogue sessions with members of local EWR Committees EWR site operators, reviewing successes, challenges, and implications for the next season – and considering changes to EWR plans;
- ✓ Development of tools and resources – including a massive revamp of the training manual to develop a multi-media EWR Facilitator/Instructor Manual, preparation of a comparative analysis of extreme weather criteria across the region; and creation of draft Standards for EWR Sheltering Sites with appended guidelines for site cleaning, fire plans, and emergency food supplies.

Inputs: Resources Invested

BC Housing provided \$213,849 for operation of EWR sites in 2009-10. In addition, BC Housing provided \$7,041 for purchase of 81 mats. Coordination costs were a total of \$84,800: BC Housing provided \$52,800 for sub-regional coordination in Surrey and Vancouver, while Service Canada provided \$32,000 for Metro Vancouver regional coordination.

The EWR program relied heavily on in kind contributions. Implementation of community EWR plans continued to rely upon donated services and resources, including everything from shelter sites themselves to food, blankets and, most importantly, volunteers (the value of these countless contributions would be difficult to approximate.) Local EWR committees contributed community level leadership and local coordination, for an approximate value of \$25,000. In addition, the GVSS provided in-kind leadership through the EW Task Group, for an approximate value of \$10,000.

Outputs: Services Delivered

Communities across Metro Vancouver provided a grand total of 2,637 person-nights of EWR service in 2009-10, mostly during the month of December. As shown in the table below, this volume of service delivered was significantly lower than the previous year (8,699 person nights) and appears as an aberration in the trend of increased EWR service use from year to year. This was due to relatively mild weather in the early months of 2010, and additional low barrier shelter services provided in connection with the 2010 Winter Olympics.

EWR Person Nights by Sub-Region: 2003-04 through 2009-10

Community	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Burnaby				249	787	1,175	13
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TOTAL	625	2,634	2,107	4,416	5,457	8,699	2,637

Gender and Age Analysis

Of the 2,637 person-nights of service, 2,261 were used by males (86%) and 376 were used by females (14%). No sites reported transgender clients. Of the total, just 7 were reported as being under 19 years of age (less than 1%).

Turn- Aways

Nobody was turned away for lack of space, and sites reported a total of just 4 incidences of turning a person away for other reasons.

Burnaby

The 2008 regional homeless count found 86 homeless individuals in Burnaby.

In 2009 the St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church decided to cease serving as an EWR site, and the program moved to the Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addictions. This site was less accessible, and a total of just 13 person-nights of service were provided over 10 nights of operation. Also, some Burnaby homeless people accessed additional Vancouver's low barrier HEAT (Homelessness Emergency Action Team) shelters and the Winter Response shelters provided in conjunction with the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Langley

The 2008 homeless count showed 86 homeless people in Langley.

For 2009-10 Langley's EWR shelter moved from the Langley Evangelical Free Church to the new Gateway of Hope shelter. Clients accessed a total of 113 person-nights of service, including one family, during 14 nights of operation.

New Westminster

The 2008 homeless count identified 123 homeless people in New Westminister. Local service providers and advocates consider as many as one hundred of these individuals to be 'entrenched' homeless – individuals that have lived without a fixed address for several consecutive years and experience multiple barriers to accessing stable, long-term housing.

For 2009-10, the New Westminister Salvation Army provided EWR shelter for adults and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society provided for youth. The Salvation Army site operated for 22 nights, providing 195 person-nights of service. The Purpose site operated for 20 nights yet provided no person-nights (zero up-take). As with Burnaby, service providers observed that some past clients were accessing the additional low-barrier shelter services in Vancouver.

North Shore

The 2008 homeless count found a total of 124 homeless people in North Shore communities, about half of whom lived on the streets.

In 2009-10 Lookout's North Shore provided EWR service on 20 nights, for a total of 191 person-nights. The overflow site, North Shore Neighbourhood House, was not required.

Richmond

The 2008 homeless count documented 56 homeless people in Richmond. The count report also recognized a broader population of homeless people who were difficult to count, mostly women.

Once again in 2009-10, Richmond had two EWR shelter sites available: Salvation Army's Richmond House and St. Alban's Anglican Church. During 23 nights of service provision, the Salvation Army provided 103 person-nights and St. Alban's provided 204 – for a total of 307.

Surrey / White Rock

The 2008 count identified 402 homeless people in Surrey and 17 in Delta/White Rock.

In 2009-10 the Surrey / White Rock sub-region had 5 EWR shelter sites available, of which 4 were needed: Cloverdale Christian Fellowship, Nightshift Street Ministries, Surrey Urban Mission, and White Rock First United Church. Hyland House, an overflow site, was not required.

As summarized in the table below, the 4 sites operated for 16-22 nights, providing a total of 1,196 person nights of service.

Surrey/White Rock EWR 2009-10: Statistical Summary

<i>Site</i>	<i># nights open</i>	<i># person nights of service</i>
Cloverdale Christian Fellowship	22	203
Nightshift Street Ministries	17	127
Surrey Urban Mission	20	774
White Rock First United Church	16	92
TOTAL	22	1,196

For further details on the Surrey / White Rock EWR in 2009-10, please see Appendix 1.

Tri-Cities

The 2008 count documented 94 homeless people in the Tri-Cities. In 2009-10, the Tri-Cities EWR shelter at Trinity United Church in Port Coquitlam did not need to open because the Tri-Cities Cold/Wet Weather Shelter did not reach 75% capacity during periods of extreme weather.

Vancouver

The 2008 count documented a total of 1,576 homeless people in Vancouver.

In 2009-10 6 sites provided EWR services in Vancouver: First Baptist Church, The Gathering Place, Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, Salvation Army Belkin House, Salvation Army Cross-Culture, St. Mark's and the Umbrella. These sites opened from 1-16 nights each, for a total of 622 person-nights of service.

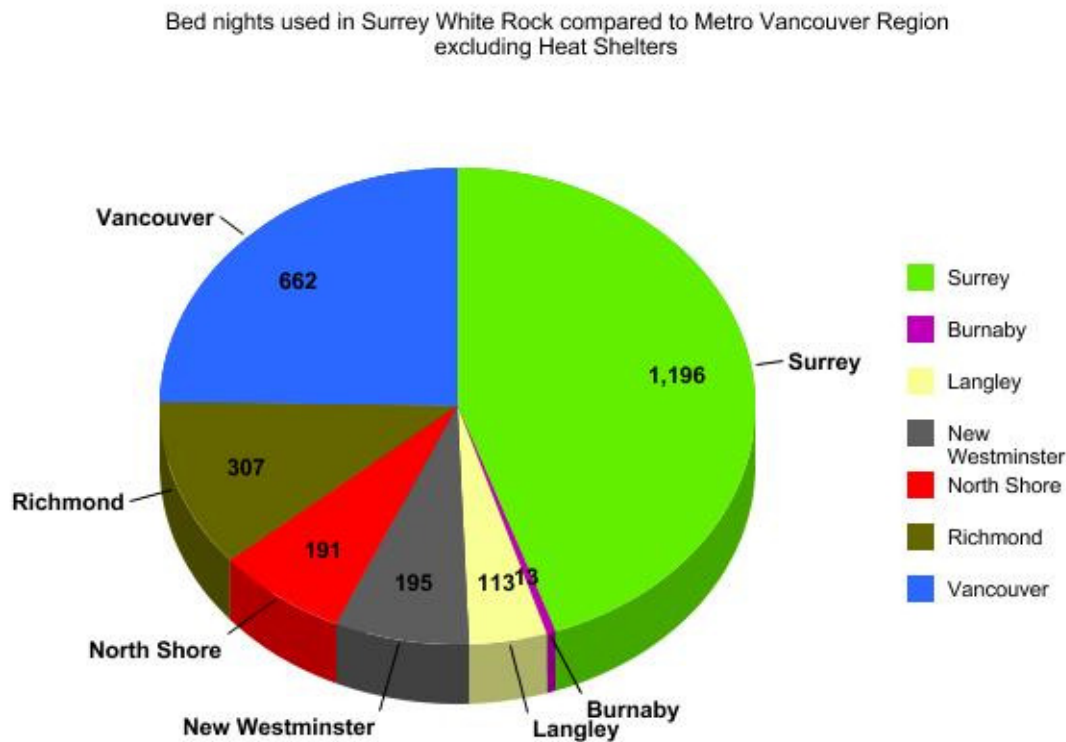
Vancouver EWR 2009-10: Statistical Summary

<i>Site</i>	<i># nights open</i>	<i># person nights of service</i>
First Baptist Church	7	86
The Gathering Place	10	100
Grandview Calvary Baptist Church	1	18
Salvation Army Belkin House	10	31
Salvation Army Cross-Culture	16	140
St. Mark's	16	238
The Umbrella	16	9
TOTAL	16	622

For further details on the Vancouver EWR in 2009-10, please see Appendix 2.

Summary of 2009-10 EWR Bed Nights, By Sub-Region

As shown in the chart below, Surrey / White Rock had the largest volume of services of any sub-region. Vancouver had a relatively lower volume, due in part to the availability of low-barrier services through the 2010 Winter Response and HEAT shelters.



BC Housing EWR report 2009/2010

Outcomes

The logic model developed for the EWR program lists five outcomes. A few of these outcomes have quantitative indicators; most, however, use qualitative indicators.

Improved access to emergency shelter during extreme weather

During the 2009-10 winter season there were up to 625 extra emergency shelter spaces available to be opened during extreme weather. The availability of these shelter spaces led to 2,637 person nights of service being used. The people served may have otherwise faced serious threats to their health and safety due to sleeping outdoors in extreme cold and wet weather. There were just 4 reported turn-aways at EWR shelters, down from 38 in 2008-09. In turn, that figure was down from the prior year – suggesting a positive trend.

As shown in the table below, up to 25 EWR sites were available to be opened across the region in 2009-10, as needed. Of these, 17 opened and 8 were not required.

Metro Vancouver EWR Capacity 2009-10

Community	Sheltering Site <i>(Sites shown in italics did not need to be activated in 2009-10)</i>	Address	Intake/ closing	EWR spaces
Burnaby	Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addictions	3405 Willingdon Ave (near BCIT)	8 pm 8 am	30
Langley	Gateway of Hope	5787 Langley Bypass	7 pm 7 am	30
New Westminster	Salvation Army – New Westminster	325 6 th St	9 pm 8 am	40
	Lower Mainland Purpose Society (youth–under 25)	40 Begbie St	9-12pm	10
North Shore	North Shore Shelter	705 West 2 nd St (@ Bewicke)	24 hr, 9 am	20
	<i>North Shore Neighbourhood House</i>	225 East 2 nd St	TBD	20
Richmond	Richmond House (men)	3111 Shell Rd	9 pm - 9 am	6
	St. Alban's Anglican Church	7260 St. Alban's Rd	9 pm 8am	16
Surrey/ White Rock	Cloverdale Church	5770 175 St	8 pm - 8 am	10
	First United White Rock /South Surrey	15385 Semiahmoo Ave	11 pm 7 am	10
	NightShift Street Ministries	10759 135 St	8 pm - 8 am	25
	Surrey Urban Mission	13388 104 th Av	7 pm - 8 am	40
	<i>Hyland House</i>	6595 King George Hwy	11 pm – 1 am	15
Tri Cities	<i>Trinity United Church</i>	2211 Prairie Ave, Port Coquitlam	10 pm	20
Vancouver	<i>10th Ave Church</i>	10 th & Ontario	10 pm 7 am	25
	<i>Covenant House (Youth 16-24)</i>	575 Drake St	9 pm	12
	<i>East Vancouver Vineyard Church</i>	1648 E. 1 st Ave	10 pm-8 am	40
	<i>Evelyne Saller Centre</i>	320 Alexander St	12:00-7 am	40
	First Baptist Church	969 Burrard St	9:30 pm- 7am	35
	Gathering Place	609 Helmcken St	12:00- 7 am	40
	Salvation Army Belkin House	555 Homer St	11:30 pm	20
	<i>Salvation Army Harbour Light</i>	119 E. Cordova St	11:30 pm	50
	Salvation Army X-Culture	1648 E 1 st Ave	9:30 pm	40
	St. Mark's EWR Shelter	1805 Larch St	9:30 pm	25
	The Umbrella (women only)	625 Powell St	11:30 p 7 am	6
TOTAL				625

Reduced risk during extreme weather

For homeless people who stayed at the EWR sheltering sites during extreme weather, the risks of illness, hypothermia and death were greatly reduced. Seven communities with EWR plans also had outreach teams to travel to areas known to be frequented by people who are homeless to disseminate information about the location of EWR sheltering site and to distribute hot drinks and blankets to those who choose to remain outside. These outreach activities made a significant impact upon the success of the homeless being aware of the EWR sites, and feeling comfortable to access these sites.

Improved co-ordination of sheltering services during extreme weather

During extreme weather periods, the Regional EWR Coordinator provided daily updates to BC Housing and partners across the region as needed. This timely information helped to coordinate the EWR services with the regular shelter services across the region.

The continued appointment of the two sub-Regional Coordinators for Vancouver and Surrey had a significant impact to ensure that there was excellent community information and action to meet the needs of the homeless in these more populous communities. The positive outcome of this coordination is amply visible by the increase in shelter sites and corresponding use.

Additionally, the EWR planning group in each community has developed strategies and contact lists to communicate more effectively with community based organizations, service providers, and directly with the homeless to ensure that those in need of EWR shelters are able to access the appropriate sites.

Improved understanding of local and regional needs during extreme weather

Work with people who are homeless during extreme weather periods this past year taught many communities the importance of the Homeless Outreach services, made possible by BC Housing funding, to spread the word about the availability and location of EWR shelters.

By conducting needs assessments, the program was able to secure required resources and coordinate distribution to local EWR sites.

Increased public awareness of homelessness and Extreme Weather Response

A pre-season media briefing on EWR in the region and ongoing media relations work in response to requests for interviews and information served as a means to get the message out to the public about homelessness in Metro Vancouver, the community-based EWR program, and the opportunity to donate. Media attention helps generate volunteers and other resources. Most importantly, it contributes to homeless people and concerned community members being aware of, and able to find, EWR shelter sites.

Furthermore, the media allow the public to learn about the immense support of the volunteers in the local EWR communities and the need for longer-term solutions such as year round shelters, as well as affordable and supported housing.

Sustainability

Local Extreme Weather Responses

The financial sustainability of local EWR programs has been addressed by BC Housing's commitment to provide funding to communities that have an EWR Plan and that have negotiated a nightly operational budget with BC Housing. Communities are required to continue to be responsible to raise funds for any capital expenses (i.e. for mats and blankets). The Canadian Red Cross has committed to assist various EWR communities with emergency supplies such as hygiene kits and blankets to meet needs during EWR.

With the financial sustainability of EWR plans secured, the availability of sufficient and trained volunteers has remained an ongoing matter.

Regional Extreme Weather Coordination

The Regional EWR Coordinator has proven to be an important position to ensure that each EWR community in Metro Vancouver reviews and updates its EWR plan before the season starts. The Regional Coordinator serves as the catalyst to EWR planning, provides support to the planning groups and serves as a conduit for information exchange among the communities. These functions continued this past year, including through the two sub-regional co-ordinators, to assist all 8 communities.

In addition, the Regional Coordinator has been the main contact for news media. Having one regional contact for the media has shown important benefits. It has eased the strain on local EWR partners while their time and energy needs to be focused on serving the homeless persons in their communities. It has also allowed more consistent messaging through the media across the region.

Metro Vancouver EWR Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

1. Local communities were able to respond appropriately based on availability of local emergency beds and local weather conditions.
2. Developing centralized media relations and common key messages helped to manage requests for news regarding the homeless at times of extreme weather conditions.
3. Region-wide communication during the extreme weather event via email worked well and helped to keep many people 'in the loop.'
4. Experience of EWR in several communities has contributed to positive movement towards more permanent services for homeless people, including some moving directly into housing and/or accessing addiction recovery services.
5. Support for EWR in communities remains high both among those directly involved in planning and implementing the response, and among the public.
6. Communities appreciated the exchange of information and resources from other EWR communities as this helped to minimize the workload and allowed them to take advantage of lessons learned in other communities.
7. Availability of assured funding from BC Housing supported communities to activate their EWR. This relieved a large amount of stress they have experienced in previous years and allowed them to concentrate fully on providing shelter.
8. Collecting statistics and invoices from the sheltering sites, approved through BC Housing in an orderly and pre-determined method, ensured the statistics for this season were reported and funds could be disbursed smoothly.

Challenges

Many of the challenges identified in past evaluations have been eliminated through the direction and planning by BC Housing, through its policy and procedures for EWR, and by the funding of homeless outreach services.

Challenges faced in 2009-10 included the following:

1. Some communities at times experienced difficulty in determining when to issue extreme weather alerts due to significantly different forecasts issued by different weather services. Communities outside of Vancouver seemed to rely mostly on the Weather Network whereas Vancouver relied mainly on Environment Canada. However, the strategy is for each community to make its own decision in activating their EWR.

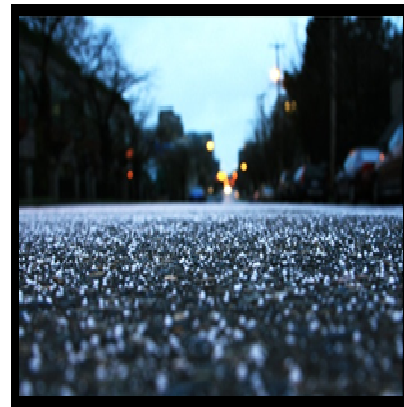
2. Definitions of extreme weather, and the criteria for calling alerts in community EWR plans, diverged somewhat over the years. To some extent the resulting differences appropriately reflect the unique sub-regional circumstances. However, there is also a need to review each plan to strengthen consistency of these definitions and criteria.
3. Recently, the world community has become cognizant of the climate change that also impacts summer weather conditions. Even in Metro Vancouver extreme heat could cause significant health risks for the homeless. This issue of extreme weather related to high temperatures and lack of access to cool accommodation or proper water for hydration needs to be addressed.

Recommendations

Follow up on past recommendations

The 2008-09 EWR Evaluation included the following 5 recommendations:

1. Encourage community EWR planning groups to develop more consistent extreme weather alert guidelines based on general risk to health and safety, with consideration of temperature, snow accumulation, precipitation and wind.
2. Facilitate end of season focus groups to evaluate the execution of the EWR in each community and consider ideas and options for the following year.
3. Encourage each EWR community to include in their plan the weather service they will use to call their alerts.
4. Ensure there are people ready to serve as back-ups for all EWR Coordinators.
5. Continue to explore options for protecting the health and safety of people living with no fixed address during periods of extreme hot weather.



All of these recommendations were implemented in 2009-10. However, Recommendation 5 – regarding development of an extreme hot weather response – requires dedicated funding for further planning and prototyping of a coordinated effort to minimize risks to health and safety of homeless people during heat waves.

New recommendations

The evaluator offers the following new recommendations for consideration by the GVSS and partner organizations.

1. **Seek funding to develop and implement a coordinated extreme hot weather response.**
2. **Explore issues of EWR accessibility for people with disabilities, dementia, and other conditions.** With an aging population, it will be important for EWR services to assess their capacity and to enhance facilities and staff training as required.
3. **Continue to strengthen linkages and referral capabilities between Extreme Weather Response sites and local services and resources.**
4. **Bring Langley and Delta into the Surrey/White Rock EWR sub-region to create a South of Fraser EWR response for each of the involved communities.** The new Delta EWR site logically fits with the Surrey/White Rock EWR response. Langley has an established site and would benefit from having a coordinator in relatively close proximity.
5. **Review resource requirements to sustain strong regional and sub-regional EWR coordination.**

Appendix 1: Surrey/White Rock 2009-2010 Extreme Weather Response Report
 Report created by: Peter Fedos, Surrey/White Rock Extreme Weather Response Coordinator

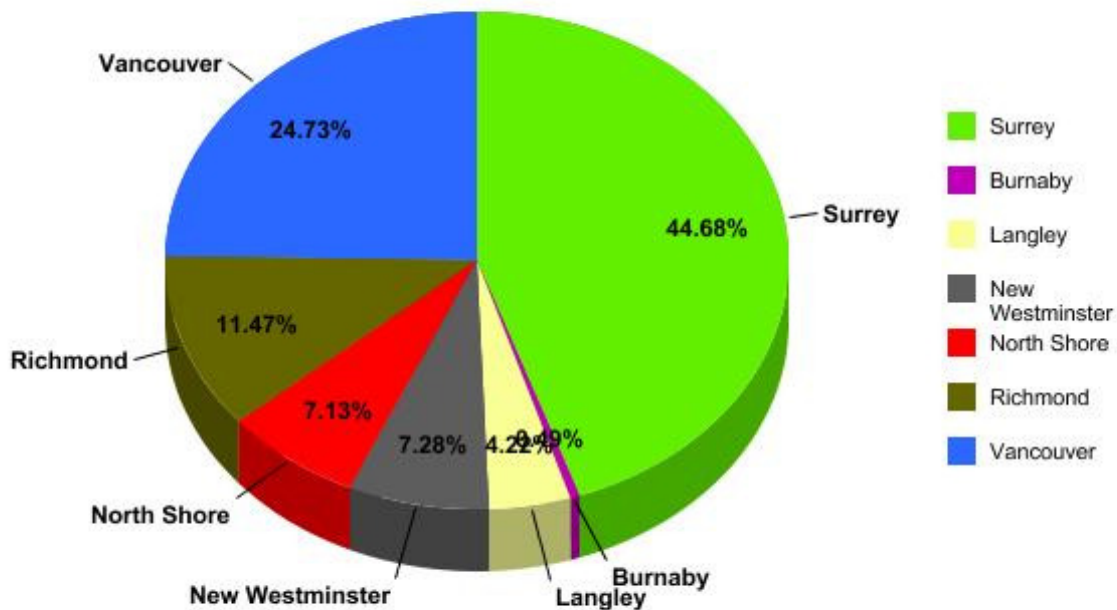
2009-2010 EWR Review:

Surrey Urban Mission, NightShift, Cloverdale Christian Fellowship, First United Church White Rock and Hyland House all participated in the 2009-2010 EWR program. White Rock expanded its space from 10-15 mats, and a new site at NightShift Ministries became operational with space for 25 people.

The sites provided 1,196 EWR bed nights, of a total of the 2,637 bed nights provided in the Metro Vancouver area. Based on the BC Housing EWR data, Surrey/White Rock provided 45% of the total space used in Metro Vancouver.

Surrey/White Rock Bed Nights

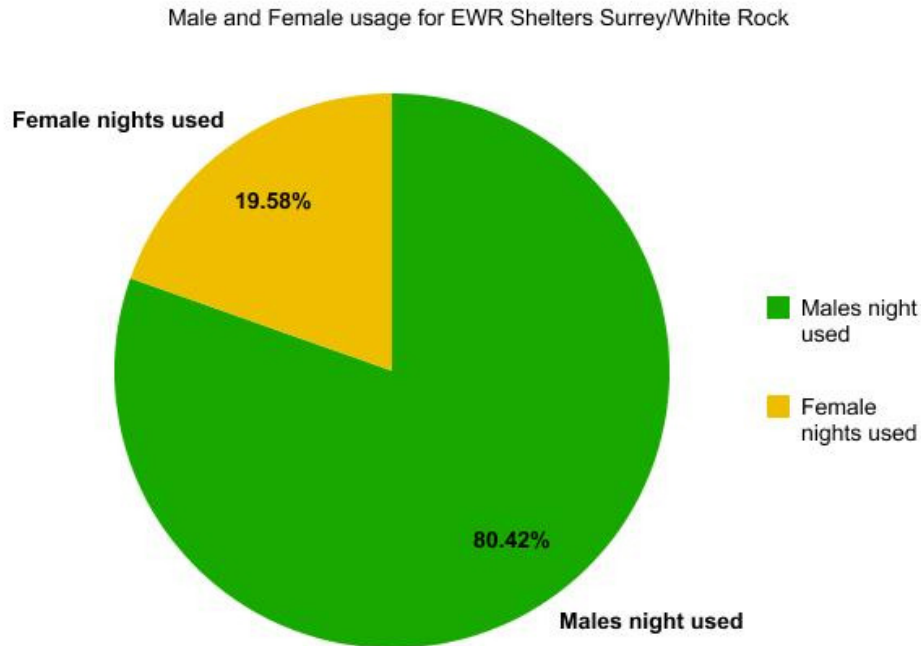
Bed nights used in Surrey White Rock compared to Metro Vancouver Region excluding Heat Shelters



BC Housing EWR report 2009/2010

Gender breakdown was fairly consistent with permanent mixed use shelter in the region with an 80/20 split. Males used 80% of the space and females used 20% of the space in Surrey/White Rock.

Gender breakdown in Surrey/White Rock EWR site usage



BC Housing EWR report 2009/2010

The Surrey/White Rock response faced some challenges prior to becoming operational in the winter of 2009. The first challenge overcome was in the area of documentation from past seasons. No prior documentation was accessible which could have been used to build knowledge on. No documentation or records were available from any of the past years of operation for the 2009 year to work with aside from the EWR plan submitted to the City of Surrey for 2008. Extreme beds in one form or another have been in operation in the Surrey area for approximately 15 years now. No prior learning during those years has been passed on and whatever documentation that existed appears to be lost. This meant that the Surrey/White Rock EWR had to create its own documents and contact lists and begin the bridging process into both city halls in order to nurture contacts with city staff.

City of Surrey Fire Staff made the EWR coordinator aware that they had never undertaken any fire inspection of the EWR sites in the previous years. A meeting with Bylaws, City of Surrey Social Planning, and the Surrey Fire Department was convened. Protocols were worked out and an agreed upon inspection cycle was developed for the EWR sites. All sites that were ready to open were inspected and passed.

Kla-how-eya was an EWR site provider the year before. They had undergone significant staffing changes this winter which prevented them from participating this season. This prompted discussion with NightShift ministries to open in order to replace some of the space that would be lost with Kla-how-eya unable to participate in the 2009-2010 season. NightShift was able to provide space for 25 people overnight when called upon to open.

Bill 18A was put into affect which provided the framework on how EWR notifications were to be made. Discussions at the Surrey/White Rock EWR monthly tables about Bill 18A revolved around who was liable issues for the EWR site should someone be dropped off, choose not to stay, wander off and get hurt somehow. Some providers expressed concern others decided to adopt a wait and see approach.

The EWR coordinator for Surrey/White Rock began discussion with Delta municipal staff and organizations around establishing an EWR site in the South Delta area at First United Church.

BC Housing supported the Surrey/White Rock EWR program by paying for new mats which replaced old ones at sites that were damaged. Other mats were set aside for Delta and NightShift received 25 mats for their site.

The debrief session at the end of the year was a positive experience. Members who participated in the program expressed appreciation for being kept in the “loop” around communications and operations this year. They stated they felt more a part of it compared to the previous year. During the discussion it became apparent that the providers were expressing a desire to refine the program in such a way that there were standards and practices in place in order enhance the program.

Weather was unseasonably mild from mid February on. This was unexpected and most of the work done was in December. The EWR program in Surrey was actually open over Christmas day and Christmas night. From November 13th to December 27th was the time period when most of the calls were made to open the sites.

NightShift, Surrey Urban Mission, Cloverdale Christian Fellowship and First United Church in White Rock averaged 20 days of service for the Surrey/White Rock EWR. Hyland House did not open since the other sites were meeting demand and remained as a space for reserve capacity should it have been needed. It was felt that the mild weather impacted the need for EWR space.

The openings in November were due to heavy rain and wind warnings. This also occurred on one night in March. The EWR group during their debrief felt there needs to be a more refined definition of what extreme winds and heavy rains mean in order to be clearer as to when they need to open.

Appendix 2: Vancouver 2009-2010 Extreme Weather Response Report

Prepared by Grant Gayman, Vancouver Extreme Weather Response Coordinator

The Community Committee of the Vancouver 2009-2010 Extreme Weather Response was comprised of Judy Graves of the City of Vancouver Housing Centre, representatives of twelve Extreme Weather shelters and the Vancouver Sub-Regional EWR Coordinator, Grant Gayman. The shelters were located at Covenant House, East Vancouver Vineyard Church, The Evelyne Saller Centre, First Baptist Church, The Gathering Place, Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, Saint Mark's Anglican Church, The Salvation Army Belkin House, The Salvation Army Harbour Light, The Salvation Army X-Culture, Tenth Avenue Alliance Church and The Umbrella. All had operated under the 2008/2009 EWR Plan, except The Umbrella, which replaced the shelter previously operated by Powell Place, and East Vancouver Vineyard Church and The Salvation Army X-Culture, operating on different nights out of the same premises at 1648 E. 1st Avenue. The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society did not participate in the coordinated Vancouver Extreme Weather Response this year due to continued operation of its HEAT shelter located at 201 Central.

It was predicted that "El Nino" would make the 2009-10 season relatively mild, and for once the forecast came true. Extreme Weather Alerts were issued for only 16 nights, all occurring in two stretches in December (4th-14th and 22nd-26th). This is compared to the previous year when alerts were declared for 37 nights between December 12, 2008 and March 11, 2009. On average, six shelters were open each night, and staff and volunteers at St. Mark's, the Umbrella and the newcomers East Vancouver Vineyard Church/X-Culture deserve commendation for their dedication and stamina in opening every night. A total of 622 bed nights of shelter were provided (compared to 2,149 in 2008-09).

The 2009-10 season was the fourth year a sub-regional coordinator had been designated for Vancouver. Experience gained and relationships established in the previous three years facilitated continued progress towards the goal of a coordinated response by a large number of shelter-providers serving a large number of clients. Communication and coordination between shelters continued to improve, resulting in orderly openings and appropriate closures. Where possible, shelters in high-volume neighbourhoods were opened on a rotational basis, thereby balancing the need for shelter spaces with the overall capability of covering longer spells of extreme weather conditions. Some nights, some shelters waited on stand-by status in case additional shelter was needed. Alerts and specifics of shelter openings were published to an expanded network of emergency services, health authorities, community agencies, faith-based groups and outreach workers.

Three of the five HEAT shelters opened during the 2008-09 season continued to operate every night, year-round. These were the Aboriginal shelter, the New Fountain shelter at 51 West

Cordova and First United Church at Hastings and Gore. Averaging over 350 persons (in total) each night, these facilities sheltered homeless persons in the Downtown Eastside in a way EWR shelters were never intended to. In the result, while S.A. Harbour Light was on standby every night an Alert was declared, it was never necessary to actually open an additional facility in the DTES.

In addition to the HEAT shelters, the City of Vancouver opened four Winter Shelters in various neighbourhoods around the City: Mount Pleasant, Kitsilano, the West End and Yaletown. The availability of both the Winter and HEAT shelters, coupled with their earlier opening and longer operating hours, plus more moderate weather conditions, all combined to reduce the number of individuals accessing EWR shelters: the average number of individuals sheltered in Vancouver EWR shelters each night of an Alert decreased significantly from the previous year (39 versus 58). While the Winter shelters all closed April 30th, the Province recently announced continued funding of the HEAT shelters for up to three more years.

A matter that generated much publicity during the 2009-10 season was the enactment of the *Assistance to Shelter Act*. Under this statute local police forces are given authority, during declared Alerts, to deliver persons at risk due to extreme weather to EWR shelters, even against their will. While the Vancouver Police Department announced that it would use other powers before resorting to the A.S.A., Salvation Army X-Culture reported that on a number of nights persons were brought involuntarily to the shelter by the police. Diffusing tension caused by reluctant clients created an additional challenge for staff.

The ongoing challenge for next year will be finding new (additional) EWR shelter sites and service-providers. These are particularly needed outside of the downtown core to supplement the great work being done by existing shelters. Matters to be considered include another shelter for Kitsilano, and new ones in the West End, the Collingwood/Kingsway corridor, and the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood. Possibilities include St. James Community Square, St. Patrick's Parish at 13th and Main, Salvation Army Family Services and Glad Tidings Church.