

# NEW WESTMINSTER EXTREME WEATHER RESPONSE PLAN

2009/2010

## 1. Introduction

The New Westminister Extreme Weather Response Plan provides a framework for expanding resources to people who are homeless to reduce hardships associated with extreme winter weather conditions in New Westminister.

The development of the plan was spearheaded by a group of representatives from community and social service organizations involved in providing services, either directly or indirectly, to the homeless in New Westminister. These included:

Community and Social Service Organizations:

- Atira Women's Resource Society
- Elizabeth Fry Society
- Fraserside Community Services Society
- Lookout Emergency Aid Society
- Lower Mainland Purpose Society for Youth and Families
- Salvation Army (New Westminister)
- Senior Services Society
- Union Gospel Mission

City of New Westminister:

- Development Services, Social Planning
- New Westminister Fire and Rescue Services
- New Westminister Police Service

Provincial Government:

- Emergency Medical Services
- Ministry of Housing and Social Development

## 2. Homelessness Situation in New Westminister:

New Westminister has seen an increase in homelessness between the regional count conducted in 2005 and the regional count conducted in 2008. In fact, the homeless population increased from 92 to 124 or by 35% for the time period in question. Of the homeless who were counted in 2008, 72 or 58% were living on the street.

City of New Westminster Bylaw Enforcement Officers, who conduct daily homeless patrols, estimate the number of deeply entrenched homeless who live on the streets at between 40 and 60 at any one time. Homeless outreach workers believe this number is closer to 100. Regardless of the true number, all agree on the need for more housing resources to serve this population, especially during the winter months.

### 3. Emergency Shelter Capacity in New Westminster

There are currently 53 emergency shelter beds in New Westminster which are available during the winter months. These are:

Emergency Shelter	Capacity during Winter Months
Gurney's Place Shelter 402 E. Columbia Street NW, V3L 3X1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operated year round by the Elizabeth Fry Society.</li> <li>For single women and single mothers with children.</li> <li>10 units for single women / 2 units for single mothers with children.</li> </ul>
Fraserside Shelter 1206 Eighth Avenue NW, V3M 1S3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operated year round by Fraserside Community Services Society.</li> <li>For families with children and single women.</li> <li>12 beds.</li> </ul>
Stevenson House 32 Elliot Street NW, V3L 2K1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operated year round by the Salvation Army.</li> <li>For single men.</li> <li>14 beds.</li> </ul>
The College Place 740 Carnarvon Street NW, V3M 1E7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operated year round by the Lookout Emergency Aid Society.</li> <li>For single men.</li> <li>15 beds.</li> </ul>

### 4. The Extreme Weather Response Plan

The New Westminster Extreme Weather Response Plan must meet the diverse needs of the homeless population (e.g., men, women, youth, families, people with disabilities and seniors). It must anticipate demand for service and weather conditions and ensure that facilities are open during extreme winter weather conditions. It must also ensure that adequate staffing, safeguards and other resources are in place.

#### Extreme weather is defined as:

Conditions deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life and/or health of people who are homeless in New Westminster, such as:

- temperatures at or below -2 degrees Celsius or 0 to -2 degrees Celsius with a wind chill;
- heavy rain in combination with low temperatures (close to 0 degrees Celsius);
- five or more days of rain creating conditions where it is difficult for people to keep dry;<sup>1</sup>
- significant snow accumulation;
- significant wind storms that present a risk to those living in wooded areas.

<sup>1</sup> These conditions would necessitate the activation of an alert for only one night. After that night, five or more days of rain would have to occur prior to the activation of a similar alert, and, again, this would be for only one night.

**Activation Team:**

The following individuals will decide when to activate or deactivate an extreme weather alert. They will make the determination based on the conditions as reported by the Weather Network's New Westminster Sensor. These individuals are:

Name	Organization	Cell Number
Anthony Owusu	The Salvation Army	
David MacPherson	The Salvation Army	

In activating an extreme weather alert when temperatures are not at or below -2 degrees Celsius (e.g., heavy or prolonged rain, significant snow accumulation, wind storm, etc.), Mr. Owusu or Mr. MacPherson will gain the consent of one of the three below listed people:

Name	Organization	Cell Number
Caroline Bonesky	Fraserside Community Services Society	
Dave Brown	Lookout Emergency Aid Society	
Bill Wong	Union Gospel Mission	

**Activating/Deactivating an Alert:**

Mr. Owusu or Mr. MacPherson will be responsible for all notification with regard to the activation or deactivation of an alert.

Where possible, an alert will be activated prior to 12:00 p.m. (noon) of the day of the alert in order to mobilize staffing resources and ensure adequate time for notification. An alert can be called for up to three days in advance (based on weather reports) but must be reviewed the following day (again, based on weather reports) to determine if the alert is still warranted.

Due to differences or variations in weather conditions across Metro Vancouver, an alert may be called in New Westminster even if an alert is not called in neighbouring municipalities or elsewhere in the region. When an alert is called, weather conditions will be documented at the time of the alert for accountability purposes.

**Notification to New Westminster Agencies and Organizations:**

The below people will be notified in the event of an extreme weather alert (or the deactivation of an alert). The purpose of the notification is to raise awareness regarding the severity of the weather conditions and the potential impacts on people who are homeless and to inform outreach workers and others of the additional shelter resources available to people who are homeless in New Westminster.

Listing of names of agency and organization representatives removed for purpose of posting on website.

## Notification to BC Housing Activation and Deactivation Team:

As soon as you know a response is being activated.

Individual	E-Mail Address
Diana Kirady	dkirady@bchousing.org
Seumas Gordon	Seumas.Gordon@gov.bc.ca
David Haslam	david.haslam@gov.bc.ca
Allison Jones	aljones@bchousing.org
Fergus McCann	fmccann@bchousing.org
Stacey McGaghey Jones	Stacey.McGagheyJones@gov.bc.ca
Elizabeth McNabb	emcnabb@bchousing.org
Sarah Morris	Sarah.Morris1@gov.bc.ca
Sam Rainboth	srainboth@bchousing.org
Roberta Randall	rrandall@bchousing.org
Nicole Stinson	nmarques@bchousing.org
Paul Woolley	Paul.Woolley@gov.bc.ca

## Occupancy Reports:

By 11:00 a.m. the following business day of Extreme Weather Response.

Fax	E-Mail Address
604-439-4722	homeless@bchousing.org

## Shelter Invoice:

Within two weeks of extreme weather event and no later than March 25, 2010. By fax or e-mail to the regional extreme weather contact.

## Additional Temporary Emergency Shelter:

When an extreme weather alert is called, the following temporary shelters can be activated:

- A triage site will be opened at The Salvation Army Church (325 Sixth Street) and all persons needing shelter will be directed to go there first. If needed, they will then be directed to another appropriate shelter site.
- The Salvation Army Church will open its gym as a temporary emergency shelter for up to 40 men and women. This facility is wheelchair accessible.
- The Lower Mainland Purpose Society (40 Begbie Street) will open their drop-in centre over night and will take up to 10 youth.
- Outreach to youth will be provided by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society.

Each extreme weather response site will be responsible for developing its own activation plan with regard to ensuring that adequate staffing, safeguards and other resources are in place.

To assist in notifying people who are homeless regarding the activation or deactivation of an extreme weather alert, service providers, bylaw enforcement officers, fire, police and outreach workers are requested to circulate and post the notification flyer.

**Timeframe:**

An extreme weather alert can be activated based on the conditions as described earlier and only when existing emergency shelter beds are full in New Westminster.

**Hours of Operation:**

Night time shelter is generally available between 9:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

**5. Evaluation and Plan Revision**

This plan has been developed for the 2009/10 period. After March 31, 2010, the Extreme Weather Response Planning Group will reconvene to assess the implementation of the plan and to amend it as required.