

North Shore Extreme Weather Response Plan

1. Introduction

The North Shore Extreme Weather Response Plan for the Homeless sets the framework for expanding resources for homeless persons during the winter months to prevent hardships due to extreme winter weather conditions.

The North Shore Extreme Response Committee has spearheaded the development of the Extreme Weather Response. The Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (previously the Cold Wet Weather), through funding from the Federal Government's Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative, had provided assistance with the planning and implementation process. BC Housing now funds the Extreme Weather Response. The community members involved in the Extreme Weather Response represent a broad array of organizations and agencies and represent the North Shore Homeless Task Force. Committee members include:

Community organizations

- Lookout Emergency Aid Society
- Harvest Project
- North Shore Crisis Services Society
- North Shore Neighbourhood House
- Hollyburn Family Services Society
- Canadian Mental Health Association

2. The Current Homelessness Situation

As elsewhere in the Lower Mainland and throughout Canada, the North Shore community has a portion of their population sleeping in local parks, under bridges or other places conducive to sleeping rough. While long unrecognized on the North Shore, in the mid 1990's the absolute homeless became more visible, leading all three municipalities, the health authority, local service providers, police, government representatives, residents, faith community and service clubs to coalesce together to develop local responses. The North Shore Task Force on Homelessness initiated research in 1999 and over a nine month period, found 82 individuals living on the North Shore who were absolute homeless. This led to the establishment of a youth safe house, adult shelter and transitional housing and a coordinated response to local homeless issues.

The Homeless Count

At the present time it is difficult to get an accurate count of the homeless population on the North Shore. The Region has undertaken three homeless counts to attempt to understand the need. The recently completed homeless count on March 11, 2008 helps to provide the most accurate count of the homeless, although it is important to note that given that the count was

at a single point in time and only known areas were surveyed, this count underestimates the number of homeless people. Data from 2008 found 128 individuals who were homeless on the North Shore on the night of the Count, a 40% increase over 2005 (85 individuals) and the 44 individuals found during the 2002 Homeless Count. The 128 also represents 5% of the total Metro Vancouver homelessness count. Of these 128 individuals, more than half (67) were found sleeping on the streets. Due to the associated stigma, community members who are homeless strive to remain low profile and to not attract attention. Many of these are considered the hidden homeless. There were also 37 homeless youth reported by the North Shore schools. These 37 were not included in the Homeless Count totals as it was not clear whether they had already been enumerated elsewhere the same day.

This indicates there are a significantly growing number of people who are homeless on the North Shore.

The Broader Homeless Population

The 2008 Metro Vancouver homeless count found 2,660 homeless individuals throughout the lower mainland. In addition to the homeless who seek shelter in other municipalities in the lower mainland (primarily Vancouver), there are those in the homeless population who do not seek admission into shelters. There are many areas on the North Shore where the homeless will sleep outdoors, such as in parks, under bridges, in private garages, and in cardboard recycling dumpsters. The homeless frequently mention couch surfing with friends or family. While there is no clear estimate of the size of this broader homeless population, the Extreme Weather Response Plan must take their needs into account as well.

Homeless Shelters and Services on the North Shore

At present there is one shelter for adult men and women on the North Shore. It has the capacity for 45 year-round beds. SAGE Transition House has room for 18 women and their children each night for women and their children fleeing abuse. There is a Youth Shelter with 4 beds.

There are not many services providing support to the homeless or persons living on low income on the North Shore. There is no local full-service food bank, 7 day-a-week drop in centre, or 7 day-a-week free food services on the North Shore. A number of community agencies and faith groups operate food closets, food hamper programs, distribute food vouchers and the Greater Vancouver Food Bank delivers foods once a week through the North Shore Neighbourhood House. The Harvest Project provides food hampers to those trying to improve their situation.

Free clothing is available at a number of locations including: Harvest Project, North Shore Crisis Services Society, North Shore Shelter and the Salvation Army. North Shore Crisis Services Society operates the Good Stuff Connection and supplies clothing vouchers to other services.

3. The Extreme Weather Response Plan

The Extreme Weather Response Plan must meet the needs of a wide range of homeless people (e.g. men, women, youth, seniors and families) in the community and be flexible enough to deal with a varying number of people including individuals who may be coping with challenging issues such as mental illness, addictions and other health issues. To meet these criteria, the following response has been developed.

Extreme Weather Alert

Extreme weather is defined, as conditions deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of homeless persons such as:

- Temperatures at or below 0 degrees Celsius; OR
- Significant snow accumulation; OR
- Freezing rain
- Combination of low temperatures and driving wind with or without precipitation

Temperature ‘triggers’ are not absolute and are flexible to other weather conditions.

On the North Shore, due to the geography of the area, extreme conditions may mean that the alert is enacted when other GVRD areas may not be facing extreme conditions.

Timeframe

The extreme weather response is implemented:

- Between October 15 and March 31
- Intermittently during the five-month period as weather conditions determine need.
- When regular local shelter beds are not available to fill the need

Hours of Operation

- North Shore Shelter, Sage House and the Youth Safe House will provide services on a 24 hour basis.
- 2nd stage (overflow) Extreme Weather night-time shelter opens between 8:00 pm and 8:00 am.

Activation Team/ local coordinators

The following people, or their designate will decide when to call an extreme weather alert. Two people will jointly make the determination based on local weather reports and the perceived need for shelter space in the community. They, or their designated alternates, must be available on a 24 hr/7 day-a-week basis to call an alert. Where two people are not available to jointly make the call, the person available shall do so.

- Len Balmes from Lookout Emergency Aid Society, North Shore Shelter
- Derek Pace, Harvest Project
- Cheryl McBride, North Shore Neighbourhood House
- Alternate: Karen O'Shannacery, Lookout Emergency Aid Society, for Len Balmes

A list of possible duties and responsibilities for local coordinators is attached to the plan.

Notification

The table in the appendix list the parties that will, at a minimum, be notified in the event of an Extreme Weather Alert. The purpose of the notification is to raise awareness of the severity of the weather and the potential impacts to the homeless and to provide information about the additional shelter and outreach that is being offered during the alert. These organizations will also receive information about how to get access to donated winter clothing and blankets, which can be provided to homeless clients on an as needed basis. It is expected that all contacted agencies will ensure that their staff and clientele are made aware of this situation and resources.

The EWR Work Group is responsible for regularly updating the Notification List. Lookout Emergency Aid Society has agreed to distribute the notifications by fax and/or email. Outreach to the street homeless will be offered by Lookout Emergency Aid Society, the Salvation Army and Canadian Mental Health Association.

Media Inquiries

All media inquiries will be re-directed to the Regional Extreme Weather Coordinator, James Pratt 1-250-920-7826. In the case that the Regional Extreme Weather Coordinator is not available, Len Balmes (604-982-9126) or his designate will act as the spokesperson for the North Shore Extreme Weather Response.

The Response

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

- Len Balmes from the North Shore Shelter (at 604-982-9126) will co-ordinate the response and sends out email/fax notification by noon of the day of the response. His alternate for notifications is Karen O'Shannacery (at 604-255-0340).
- The North Shore Shelter will act as the triage area and the primary response site. North Shore Shelter staff will link with the other local shelter providers (Sage House and (Youth Safe House) to determine their ability to house youth, women, or women with children during the Extreme Weather alert.

- The North Shore Shelter will be responsible for ensuring supplies and materials are on-hand to provide the response including: mats, bedding, pillows, first aid supplies, etc. Clothing will be available and distributed freely as available through donations.
- Women with children will be referred to SAGE Transition House. Single women that are inappropriate for the North Shore Shelter will also be referred.
- Adult men and women (over 18) will be housed on mats on the main floor lounge of the North Shore Shelter. Where possible, individuals will be transferred to regular shelter beds with priority towards women and individuals with special needs. The number of mats that will be available is 20.
- Youth will be referred to the Youth Safe House.
- Extreme Weather Shelter users, where ever possible, shall be integrated into the regular shelter services provided through extreme weather suppliers: e.g. extreme weather shelter users shall have, where available, access to free phone, computers, showers, laundry, etc.
- Simple suppers, snacks and breakfasts will be available at all sheltering locations.
- Overflow back-up sheltering site will be the North Shore Neighbourhood House. Mats will be moved to the site by Lookout in case they are needed just prior to a potential alert being called. Food and ancillary supplies will be kept on hand at the North Shore Neighbourhood House during the duration of the Extreme Weather. The North Shore Shelter will arrange for all supplies and mats to be on hand at the Neighbourhood House.
- Staff from North Shore Shelter will provide staffing throughout the hours the response is in place - supported by trained volunteers. SAGE Transition House and the Youth Safe House will provide their own staff and volunteers for their facilities.
- Volunteers will be needed to aid sheltering staff provide the Extreme Weather response and will be assigned to sheltering sites as needed. The Lookout Emergency Aid Society will coordinate volunteers. The Extreme Weather Response will develop a volunteer bank to assist when an extreme weather response is called, with support from the faith community.
- North Shore Crisis Services Society will provide assistance with transportation from Lookout Emergency Shelter or other North Shore location to SAGE Transition House for women and children who are referred to SAGE Transition House during extreme weather conditions. The North Shore Shelter will provide transportation assistance for those being referred to the back up site, i.e. North Shore Neighbourhood House.

- The Extreme Weather Committee will endeavour to train volunteers through the Regional Extreme Weather Response or services providing to the needs of the homeless.
- Extreme Weather resources will keep statistics on the provision of extreme weather service including numbers of shelter spaces available, number shelter spaces used on each night open, gender, any service turnaways and reasons for such. These statistics will be compiled and submitted to the Regional Extreme Weather Coordinator and BC Housing each morning of the response. Lookout admin will distribute the information.

Deactivation

The North Shore Extreme Weather Response will be deactivated when other beds are available. It shall also be deactivated when the weather is forecasted to remain above 0 degrees Celsius and/or when the weather no longer represents a substantial threat to the life of homeless people on the North Shore. The decision to maintain the response or deactivate will be re-evaluated daily.

The homeless using EWR resources shall be notified prior to leaving the EWR whether the EWR is deactivated for that day.

Lookout Emergency Aid Society will be responsible to distribute the deactivation notice following the notification procedure above and will post closure notices on the EWR doors.

4. Evaluation & Plan Revision

This plan has been developed for the 2009/2010-winter period. Before March 31, 2010, the North Shore Extreme Response Committee will reconvene to assess the implementation of the plan and to amend it as required. As part of the evaluation procedure, data collected by the organizations involved in the response will be collated and submitted to the BC Housing each morning of the response. Regular reports will be provided to the North Shore Task Force on Homelessness.

NOTIFICATION LIST:

As stated above, the intent is to notify all groups that provide after-hour service as well as all organizations providing services to the homeless when an extreme weather opening is occurring. The following list may not be inclusive, but provides guidance for the notification.

Organization	Name	Contact # Public
GVSS EWR Regional Coordinator	James Pratt	james@prattconsulting.ca
North Shore Emergency Program	TBA	604-983-7440
BC Ambulance Service	Dispatch	604-660-6897
<i>Lions Gate Hospital</i>	on duty staff	604-988-3131 (24 hr – all)
Emergency ward	on duty staff	604-984-5799
Psychiatric nurses	on duty staff	604-988-3131
<i>BC Housing</i>	Allison Jones Sheila Matthews Sam Rainboth Roberta Randall Fergus McCann Nicole Stinson Elizabeth McNabb Seumas Gordon Paul Woolley	E: aljones@bchousing.org E: smatthews@bchousing.org E: srainboth@bchousing.org E: rrandall@bchousing.org E: fmccann@bchousing.org E: nmarques@bchousing.org E: emcnabb@bchousing.org E: Seumas.Gordon@gov.bc.ca E: Paul.Woolley@gov.bc.ca E: homeless@bchousing.org
<i>City of North Vancouver</i>		604 985 7761
Community Development	Lisa McCarthy	604-983-7385
Library	on duty staff	604-998-3450
North Vanc Recreation Commission	on duty staff	604 987 7529/dd 983 6569
City Fire & Rescue	Dispatch	604-980-5021
<i>District of North Vancouver</i>	on duty staff	604 987 7131/990 2311
Fire Rescue	Dispatch	604 925 7370
Parks	on duty staff	604 990 3800
Recreation	on duty staff	604-987-7529 (M-F, 9 – 5); 604-893-0960 (emerg cell)
By-Law department	on duty staff	604 990 7470
Social Planning	Phil Chapman	604 990 2373 pchapman@dnv.org
Library	Chief Librarian	604-990-5800
<i>District of West Vancouver</i>	on duty staff	604 925 7200
Fire Rescue	Christa Rutherford	604-925-7370

Organization	Name	Contact # Public
Parks & Community Services	on duty staff	604-925-7127
Parks & Community Services	Anne Mooi	604-925-7235
Alano Club of NS	on duty staff	604-987-4141
Avalon Womens Centre	Monica Morten	604-913-0477
BC Schizophrenia Society	Marguerite Hardin	604-926-0856
Bridge Community Church	Rev. Brian Lindquist	604-985-4011
Capilano Community Services Society	Miki Nash	604-988-7115 NOTICE BY EMAIL admncss@telus.net
Chamber of Commerce	email/fax info	604-987-4488
Churches – youth Pastors	Dave Sattler	
Community Corrections	Rob Gregoire	604-981-0300 NOTICE by Fax FAX – 604-981-0037 rob.gregoire@gov.bc.ca
Community Psychiatric Services	on duty staff	604-983-6020
Co-Pro	Barbara Davies	604-992-4324
Crisis Intervention Serv - RCMP	Linda Thorp/duty officer	604-985-1311
Family Services NS	on duty staff	604-988-5281
Harvest Project	Derek Pace	604 983 9488 derek@harvestproject.org
Hollyburn Family Services Society	Alan Kwinter/Paul Butler	604-926-1185
John Braithwaite Community Centre	Richard Gauntlett Mary McSween	rgauntlett@jbcc.ca mmcsween@jbcc.ca
Lookout Emergency Aid Society	Karen O'Shannacery Irene Jaakson Yukon Shelter Cliff Outreach New Westminster Shelter Downtown Shelter North Shore Shelter	604-255-0340 karen@lookoutsociety.ca homehelp1@shaw.ca irenej@lookoutsociety.ca yukonshelter@lookoutsociety.ca orcliff@lookoutsociety.ca lookoutnewwest@lookoutsociety.ca dtshelter@lookoutsociety.ca nsshelter@lookoutsociety.ca
MEIA Intake & Family Services	Terry Leiko (team leader)	604-981-0008
Mental Health Services	on duty staff	info line 604 669 7600
Min of Employment & Income Assist	on duty staff	604-981-0100
After Hours (evenings & weekends)	On duty staff	604-660-3194
Native Courtworker & Counseling Assoc	on duty staff	604-985-5355
North Lonsdale United Church	Rev. Robin Jacobson	604-985-4911
North Shore Community Resources	Li Boesen Elaine Smith	604-985-7138 elaine@nscr.bc.ca
North Shore Neighbourhood House	Tricia Andrew	604-987-8138

Organization	Name	Contact # Public
North Shore Crisis Services		604-987-0366
North Shore Family Services	Sue Bauman	604-988-5281
North Shore Geriatric Outreach Pgm	Jaqueline Darguzas (admin)	604-904-6223
North Shore Homeless Task Force	Chief Medical Health Officer and Chair Sandra Edelman	604-983-6701
North Shore Neighbourhood House	Don Rutherford	604-987-8138 loc 203
North Shore Shelter	on duty staff	604-982-9126 NOTICE BY EMAIL & FAX - FAX is 604-982-9127
Parkgate Community Serv Society	Arleta Beckett	604-983-6350 NOTICE BY FAX FAX 604-983-6350
RCMP	Watch Commander	604-985-1311 NOTICE BY EMAIL & FAX - FAX is 604-983-7996 kim.tappay@rcmp-grc.gc.ca fabiola.malagodi@rcmp-grc.gc.ca
RCMP Crisis Intervention Unit	Linda	linda.walstoff@rcmp-grc.gc.ca
Ron Andrews Community Centre	Trish Holme	NOTICE BY EMAIL holmet@northvanrec.com
SAGE House	on duty staff	604-987-3374
Salvation Army	Peter Defehr	604-988-7225
Services to Seniors Coalition	Tom Carney	604-985-3852
So-Sah-Latch Centre	on duty staff	604-985-7826/980-4553
Squamish Ntn crisis line Healing & Wellness	On Duty staff	604-904-1257\1253
St. John's Anglican Church	Dan Meeks	604-986-1150
Vancouver Coastal Health – NS	Sarie Peters	NOTICE BY EMAIL sarie.peters@vch.ca
West Coast Alternatives Society	on duty staff	604-984-0255 NOTICE BY EMAIL altsociety@shaw.ca