

## Burnaby Extreme Weather Response Plan

### 1. Introduction

The Burnaby Extreme Weather Response (EWR) Plan sets the framework for temporarily creating local sheltering resources for homeless persons during periods of extreme winter weather conditions that threaten the health and safety of homeless people located within the municipality of Burnaby. Other communities in Metro Vancouver also have Extreme Weather Plans to meet their local needs. The expected outcomes are to reduce the health and safety risks to homeless people during periods of extreme weather, and to reduce street homelessness during extreme weather.

The Burnaby Extreme Response Work Group, a subcommittee of the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness, is responsible for the operation of Burnaby's Extreme Weather Response. This group spearheaded the development of this Response in 2005 and has responsibility to conduct annual reviews. The Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (previously known as the Regional Cold/Wet Weather Strategy), through funding from the Federal Government's Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI), provides assistance with the planning and implementation process. BC Housing, since 2007, has provided support, including funding, for the operation of extreme weather responses throughout Metro Vancouver. In November, 2009 the Assistance to Shelter Act became law in BC, enabling the local police to transport homeless individuals to shelter during extreme weather. The members involved in the Burnaby Extreme Weather Response represent a partnership between a broad array of organizations and represent the Burnaby Task Force.

#### **Extreme Weather Response Work Group members:**

- *Dave Brown - Lookout Emergency Aid Society – Lead*
- Peggy Hare – resident
- Sharon Folkes – City of Burnaby Planning Department
- James Pratt – EWR Regional Coordinator
- Karen O'Shannacery - Lookout Emergency Aid Society - *Admin Lead*
- Pastor Norm Oldham – Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy
- Kevan Oxley – Burnaby Mental Wealth Society
- Norm DeVos – Burnaby Alliance Church
- Cpl. Stephane Hamel – RCMP
- Stan - Westminster Bible Chapel
- Marianne – Westminster Bible Chapel

#### **Community organizations:**

- Lookout Emergency Aid Society
- City of Burnaby
- Burnaby Alliance Church
- Westminster Bible Chapel
- Progressive Housing Society
- Burnaby Mental Wealth Society
- RCMP – Southeast Office
- Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness and its members

## **2. The Current Homelessness Situation**

### **Background**

As elsewhere in the Lower Mainland and throughout Canada, the Burnaby community has a portion of their population sleeping in local parks, under bridges or other places conducive to sleeping rough. While long unrecognized in Burnaby, in 2001 the absolute homeless became more visible, leading a local agency (Progressive Housing Society) to initiate concerns with the municipality and the Fraser Health Authority. Funded by a federal HRSDC SCPI grant, Progressive Housing commissioned a report to help quantify the problem and to develop the community networks necessary to provide solutions.

In 2004, as a result of Progressive Housing's ongoing presentations around the needs for housing the homeless, local service providers, police, government representatives, residents, the faith community, and service clubs began to coalesce. The City responded with a successful recommendation to the Fraser Health Authority to fund an Outreach Worker. The Outreach Worker's main task was to update the statistical and anecdotal information around the local homeless population, and to strengthen community networks. This community network came together in 2005 to form the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness. The 2005 research funded by the Fraser Health Authority found 63 absolute homeless individuals living rough in Burnaby. This led to plans to formulate 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 in Burnaby. The most recent homeless count helps to provide the most accurate count of the homeless, although it is important to note that this count underestimates the number of homeless people, given that the count was at a single point in time with only known areas surveyed.

In Burnaby, the 2011 count found 73 individuals homeless, a decrease from the 86 people in the 2008 count reflecting the regional decrease. This indicates that strategies put in place since 2008 are working; the City of Vancouver HEAT shelters take some of Burnaby's homeless. The Progressive Housing Society Homeless Outreach Program is working, from 2008 and 2011 they served 1,425 unique clients, and housed 205 people of which 89 were housed more than once in this time period. Burnaby counts are challenging: the count methodology works especially well with municipalities with shelters, in that people are easier to find and enumerate in shelters than having enumerators attending camps and covering a large geographic region. It is important to note that the stigma associated with homelessness often causes community members to retain low profiles and not attract attention.

The Burnaby Extreme Weather shelter opened 40 nights during the winter of 2010 2011 and provided shelter to 156 individuals. This usage was significantly up from prior year, but similar to previous years as outlined in the table below. Transportation challenges and the opening of Vancouver HEAT shelters continued to impact the EWR. Prior EWR data is as follows:

<b>Winter</b>	<b>Nights Open</b>	<b>Bednights Provided</b>
2005 - 2006	2	0
2006 - 2007	17	242
2007 - 2008	42	794
2008 - 2009	47	1173
2009 - 2010	10	13
2010 - 2011	40	156

**The Broader Homeless Population**

The preliminary report from 2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count found, region wide, a total of 2,623 people to be homeless on March 16, 2011, representing an overall 1% decrease since the 2008 Count when the total number of people found homeless was 2,660.

The Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness will conduct another homeless count in March 2014 to assess the effectiveness of recent strategies to reduce homelessness.

In addition to the homeless who access 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 in Burnaby where the homeless will sleep outdoors, such as under bridges, in private garages, and in cardboard recycling dumpsters. The homeless frequently mention couch surfing.

While there is no clear estimate of the size of the couch surfing broader homeless population, the Extreme Weather Response Plan must take into account the needs of the homeless who are forced to leave Burnaby as well as the couch surfers.

**Homeless Shelters and Services in Burnaby**

At present, there are no shelters in Burnaby.

There are few services providing support to the homeless or persons living on low income in Burnaby. There are three local food bank locations operated by the Greater Vancouver Food Bank, and one Mental Health drop in centre in Burnaby. A few faith groups operate meal programs within their facilities. The Burnaby Metrotown Salvation Army serves a soup and sandwich meal in the evening on Mondays at two locations, as well as a Community outreach Christmas Dinner. Progressive Housing operates a mobile Health Van four days-a-week to four different Burnaby locations, bringing supplies and services to homeless individuals.

Progressive Housing Society also operates an Outreach Resource Centre once a week at Southside Community Church at 7135 Walker Ave near Kingsway.

Outreach Workers (operating out of Progressive Housing Society) are present for consultation, and Home Health Nurse (funded by Fraser Health) are on site weekly, as well as members of the Task Force, and volunteers from Progressive Housing, from many faith groups and the general public.

An Outreach Worker is available on a regular basis at Progressive Housing Society.

### **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. The sheltering site(s) will provide EWR regardless of ethno-cultural background, religious beliefs, gender identity and/or sexual orientation. The EWR will endeavour to house those with physical disabilities to the extent it is safe for the individual. 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° Celsius temperatures are not absolute and are flexible to other weather conditions}; OR
- Wind chill that reduces the temperature to 0° Celsius
- Significant snow accumulation; OR
- Temperatures at 0° during times of extended rainfall that make it difficult or impossible for individuals to remain dry; OR
- Freezing rain and/or sleet; OR
- Severe wind warning

#### **Timeframe**

The extreme weather response is implemented:

- Between October 15 and March 31 or whenever extreme weather occurs
- Intermittently during the five-month period as weather conditions determine need.
- When other shelters in Vancouver and New Westminster are not able to fill the need

#### **Hours of Operation**

- Night-time shelter, generally between 7:00 pm and 7:00 am.

### **Activation Team/ local coordinators**

The following people, or their designate will decide when to call an extreme weather alert. They will make the determination based on local weather reports and the perceived need for shelter space in the community. Should the absolute homeless be willing to access shelter, an alert will be called.

#### Co-leaders

- Dave Brown – Lookout Emergency Aid Society (alternate Karen O’Shannacery)
- Norm Oldham – Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness

They, or their designated alternates, must be available 24/7 hrs/days to call an alert.

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

### **Assistance to Shelter Act**

Once an Extreme Weather Response is called by the Extreme Weather Activation Team, for the duration of the EWR, members of the RCMP have the authority to assist homeless individuals found on the street to a shelter by providing transportation.

### **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 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. (see list at end of document). 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 Progressive Housing and through Lookout.

The RCMP headquarters notification is to follow the requirements and language as outlined by BC Housing and in the Assistance to Shelter Act. It is to also request confirmation that the email has been received and that the RCMP have activated their authorities to assist persons at risk due to extreme weather.

### **Media Inquiries**

All media inquiries will be directed to the Regional Extreme Weather Coordinator, James Pratt and Dave Brown) as the spokespeople for the Burnaby Extreme Weather Response.

BC Housing will offer media support in case of major media interest (e.g. if a controversial issue develops), or should it become necessary to coordinate media response between communities. Sam Rainboth, Senior Manager, Public Affairs, BC Housing Corporate Communications, is available to advise the Coordinator.

## **The Response**

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

1. Dave Brown from Lookout Emergency Aid Society or Norm Oldham will co-ordinate the response and send out email/fax notification by noon of the day of the response, including to BC Housing, the RCMP and the Minister. The notification list is attached.
2. A member of the Extreme Weather Response will be responsible for ensuring supplies and materials are on-hand to provide the response including: mats, bedding, pillows, first aid supplies, any extra health and safety equipment, etc. Clothing changes will be kept on-site and distributed freely as available through donations. Wherever possible emergency supplies, including cleaning supplies, will be moved to locations prior to an EWR Alert and kept secured for an EWR alert by the host site.
3. Women with children and families will be referred to the Ministry of Housing and Social Development for housing.
4. Youth (13-18) will be referred to Lower Mainland Purpose Society, and/or Covenant House or to the local office of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. (After-Hours line is 1-800-663-9122).
5. Adult men and women will be housed on mats located in the Westminster Bible Chapel, at 7540 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Burnaby within their hall (basement with separate entrance) of Burnaby. 27 mats shall be made available.
6. An alternative site is available at Burnaby Alliance Church, 8611 Armstrong Ave., Burnaby, when more than 27 individuals at one time require shelter or when the primary sheltering site may be unavailable. Burnaby Alliance Church can host 30 individuals.
7. Where a mixed gender Extreme Weather location is used, the genders will be kept in separated areas and will be provided with privacy from the opposite sex. Close supervision will be provided to ensure no inappropriate access between the two spaces. To all extent possible, couples will similarly be provided sleeping space with sensitivity to their privacy.
8. When two or more locations are operational:
  - Couples and single women will all be housed at the same location in separated areas
9. Supper and snack breakfast will be provided with support from community and faith groups. A member of the EWR working group will be appointed to coordinate meals, coffee and snacks. Provision will be made for extra supplies to be on hand at all times in case of ongoing need.
10. Volunteers will be needed to help offer the Extreme Weather sheltering services. Tasks will include setting up and taking down the sheltering spaces and nightly cleaning, preparation and serving of food & hot beverages, distributing clothing, sorting donations, offering additional support and supervision to experienced shelter staff.
11. Lookout Emergency Aid Society will provide an experienced staff person(s) when the response is in place, supported by trained volunteers. Should trained volunteers not be available, Lookout

Emergency Aid Society will provide a second staff person. A minimum of two people are required to supervise and provide assistance.

12. The EWR working group will appoint a member to recruit and coordinate volunteers. A volunteer bank will be developed to assist when an Extreme Weather response is called.
13. Bus tickets will be provided free of charge to those needing transportation to/from Extreme Weather shelter(s). Distance, mobility and weather conditions shall be the criteria used to determine eligibility for bus tickets. Where materials are needed to be moved for, during or after an alert, Lookout Emergency Aid Society, and others as available, will provide assistance with transportation.
14. Where possible, Progressive Housing Society will provide additional support through their Mobile Outreach Van.
15. The Extreme Weather Committee will endeavour to train volunteers through the regional Extreme Weather Response or services providing to the needs of the homeless.
16. 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 BC Housing and the members of the Burnaby EWR working group by 11 a.m. each morning of the response.

#### **Deactivation**

The Burnaby Extreme Weather Response will be deactivated when the weather no longer represents a substantial threat to the health and safety of homeless people in Burnaby. The decision to maintain the response or deactivate will be re-evaluated daily by the Activation Team. 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. The host site will post closure notices on the EWR doors.

#### **4. Evaluation & Plan Revision**

This plan has been developed for the 2011/2012 winter period. Before March 31, 2012, the Burnaby Extreme Weather Working Group 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 BC Housing and the members of the Burnaby EWR working group each morning of the response. Regular updates will be provided to the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness and the Regional Extreme Weather Committee of the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy.

## Burnaby Extreme Weather Homeless Shelter Response Plan Notification List

The extreme weather alert notice will be distributed to the contacts on this notification list. The preferred method of contact is shown in bold where it is not by email. The alert notice will also be copied to the members of the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness. The updating of this list is dynamic and the newest shall always be used.

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness	Wanda Mulholland	
Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy EWR Coordinator	James Pratt	
Lookout Emergency Aid Society	Dave Brown  Karen O'Shannacery  Sherrill Gullickson  Yukon Shelter Cliff Outreach New Westminster Shelter Downtown Shelter North Shore Shelter	
St. Francis de Sales Parish	Office	
	Peggy Hare Volunteer	
Burnaby Alliance Church	Eva Wong	
Westminster Bible Chapel	Marianne Buesink  Church office ( Betty Fung) Norm & Kathy Baugh (back up)	
Progressive Housing Society	Outreach Workers Cheryl Stogren Anita Stocker	
Burnaby Mental Wealth Society	Kevan Oxley	
EWR Member (GVSS)	Norman Oldham	
South Burnaby United Church	Rev. Laurie Lamb	
Willington Church	Pastor Ray Dueck	
West Burnaby United Church	Rev. Rick Newbury	

Metropolis Security	Glen de la Rangelje	
Fraser Health Authority - Medical Health Officer Burnaby/New Westminster	Nadine Loewen	
Fraser Health ED Health Serv Burnaby Hospital	TBD Christine Brooks Emergency Room Social Worker (Mon. to Fri. daytime only)  Emergency Room switchboard (weekday evenings and Saturday and Sunday)	
Fraser Health Mental Health Services	Dan Land  Sharon Mueller	
B.C. Ambulance Service	Charge Dispatcher Randy Hansen	
City of Burnaby Planning	Sharon Folkes Housing Planner	
City of Burnaby Parks and Recreation	Wendy Scott Asst Director, Recreation Serv Tom Kurucz Dave Fletcher Monica Wood Kathy Evers Tajinder Janzen Donna Savoie Laurie Woolley Louise Rusch Cindy Chang	
City of Burnaby Parks and Recreation – Park Patrol – Late Night Security		
City of Burnaby Library	Edel Toner Rogala Chief Librarian	
City of Burnaby Emergency Planning	Belinda Hung, Supervisor Emergency Planning Social Services Coordinator Coordinator Engineering Dispatch  Charmaigne Pflugrath	
City of Burnaby RCMP Emergency Services	Diane Lumley Emergency Services	

RCMP	RCMP "E" HQ OCC	
Burnaby RCMP	Switchboard – by fax (phone for email address of the on duty Watch Commander)  Cpl. Stephane Hamel Raj Ahira (front counter supervisor) Judy Wynes (Operations Communication Centre supervisor)	
Community Police Officer	CPO - NE CPO - NW CPO - SE CPO - SW	
City of Burnaby Fire Department		
BC Housing	Rubina Bedford  Roberta Randall Fergus McCann Maryann Anderson Paul Woolley Homelessness Services Dominic Flanagan Bruk Melles	
Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance	Debbie Steele Burnaby Metro Pointe Office  Susan Broadfoot	
TransLink Police	Dispatch (daytime only) Watch Commander	
Mayor's office	Maryann Manuel Sharon Fuller	