

# **Richmond Extreme Weather Response Plan**

## **Revised, October 12, 2011**

### **Introduction**

The Richmond 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 Richmond Homelessness Steering Committee spearheaded the development of the initial Extreme Weather Response Plan. Assistance with the planning process has been provided by the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy through funding from the Federal Government's Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative. The Richmond Extreme Weather Planning Committee is comprised of community members that represent a broad array of organizations and agencies. They include:

### **Community Organizations:**

- Salvation Army Richmond House
- St. Alban's Anglican Church

### **City of Richmond:**

- Policy Planning Department
- Emergency Management Office

### **The Current Homelessness Situation**

The GVRD 24 Hour Homelessness Snapshot completed March 15, 2011 estimated that there are 31 homeless people in Richmond. This number is generally accepted as a conservative estimate, as it does not include those who choose to sleep outdoors and those who slip through the cracks in the social services system. However, the number does provide a starting point for planning as an adequate response for the homeless when an extreme weather alert is called. It is anticipated that any data collected through the Extreme Weather Response Program will build the knowledge of homelessness in Richmond.

### **Regular Shelter Capacity**

There are a total of 10 shelter beds in Richmond for men. In addition, Nova House, a 10-bed transition house, provides shelter for women and their children fleeing abuse.

### **The Broader Homeless Population**

There are those in the homeless population who do not seek admission into shelters. It is common knowledge that there are some areas in the City where the homeless will congregate outdoors. These areas are outlined in this Plan. In addition, the Airport Chaplaincy reports that there are a significant number of homeless people, primarily women who often have children or are pregnant, who end up at the airport. They arrive from flights into the City or they come to the airport from the surrounding communities for a warm dry place to stay where they can go

unnoticed for a few days. While there is no clear estimation of the size of this broader homeless population, the Extreme Weather Response Plan takes their needs into account as well.

### **The Extreme Weather Response Plan**

The Extreme Weather Response Plan meets the needs of a wide range of homeless people (e.g. men, women, youth over 18, seniors, and families) in the community and is flexible enough to address a varying number of people (as few as five to as many as twenty-five or more). To meet these criteria, the Richmond alert involves a range of options and levels of response.

### **Extreme Weather Alert**

Extreme weather can include significant snow accumulations, severe winds or temperatures.

Extreme weather is defined as:

- Conditions deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of homeless persons; OR.
- Any snow accumulation; OR
- Temperatures at or below  $-2$  degrees Celsius (0 deg with a wind chill).

### **Activation**

The Richmond Emergency Management Office will decide whether to call an extreme weather alert by noon of the first day of an extreme weather event, if possible. This allows adequate time to mobilize for the activation while minimizing the potential for staff overtime costs. This determination will be based on the definition of extreme weather as outlined above, Environment Canada weather reports, weather alert notifications, and the perceived need for additional shelter space in the community.

In the winter of 2010/2011, there was a lot of use of St. Alban's Anglican Church. Should St. Alban's Anglican Church require additional mats, the City of Richmond Emergency Programs office should be contacted.

Richmond House has 5 shelter mats available for use by the other shelters.

### **Notification**

The following parties that will 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.

Richmond House  
St. Alban's Anglican Church  
Richmond Hospital Emergency Room Social Workers  
BC Ambulance Services  
RCMP  
Chimo Crisis Services  
Emergency Mental Health Services

Touchstone Family Association  
Vancouver Airport Chaplaincy  
Vancouver International Airport Authority, Airport Operations  
BC Housing  
City of Richmond departments:  
Stores  
Manager Community Bylaws  
Supervisor-Property Use Inspection  
Social Planner  
After Hours

## **The Response**

### **Additional Temporary Emergency Shelter**

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

- The Salvation Army's Richmond House Men's Shelter, 3111 Shell Road, will be expanded by 6 spaces to a maximum of 16 spaces for men.<sup>1</sup>
- St. Alban's Anglican Church, 7260 St. Alban's Road, will provide up to 16 shelter spaces.<sup>2</sup>

Activation plans for each of the three sites have been developed. Each facility director will continue to manage their site, but may call upon other agencies for assistance.

### **Outreach**

In addition to the temporary emergency shelters, outreach services will be conducted. Volunteer outreach workers will:

- Alert the homeless to the dangers of hypothermia presented by the weather conditions,
- Encourage them to seek shelter, and
- Provide transportation to the appropriate service. Those choosing to remain outdoors will receive appropriate clothing, blankets, hot food and beverages.

The following locations have been identified as potential outreach target areas:

- At Steveston Highway and Shell Road, south of Ironwood, in the adjacent wooded area
- Behind Park Road and Cooney Road, in the parkade
- Behind the former Legends Pub, across from Lansdowne Shopping Centre at Cooney and Lansdowne Road

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<sup>1</sup> The City of Richmond has indicated that, as long as the expansion of services at Richmond House is temporary and for emergency purposes, under the Extreme Weather Response Plan, regular City Bylaws pertaining to the number of people allowed to stay overnight in the house will be exempted.

- In Minoru Park
- In the Cultural Centre parkade (the Aquatic Centre is used as a place to keep warm)
- The Boy Scout Camp at Woodward's Landing

The Airport Chaplaincy will continue to monitor the airport for homeless people during the Extreme Weather Alert.

### **Timeframe**

The extreme weather response usually occurs:

- Between November 1 and March 31
- Intermittently (5 – 10 nights per year) during the five-month period, as weather conditions and need dictates.

### **Hours of Operation**

Nighttime shelters are available generally between 8:00 pm and 7:00 am. BC Housing encourages Extreme Weather Shelters to be open long enough for clients to obtain at least 8 hours of sleep per night.

### **Evaluation and Plan Revision**

In the fall of each year, the Richmond Extreme Weather Planning Committee will reconvene under the direction of the Extreme Weather Regional Coordinator with the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy to review and amend the plan as required. As part of the evaluation procedure, data collected by the organizations involved in the response will be collated and distributed by BC Housing.

Prepared by:  
Emergency Programs  
City of Richmond