



Extreme Weather Response Evaluation of the 2003-2004 Year

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Objectives

2003/2004 was the first season of implementation for C/WWS Extreme Weather Response (EWR) Program. This is the first evaluation of the EWR Program.

The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess levels of effectiveness and efficiency. The secondary purpose is to provide information for use in planning and in further development of the EWR Program.

The evaluation has three objectives as follows:

1. To provide an overview of the EWR Program in 2003 - 2004
2. To identify inputs, outputs and outcomes
3. To analyze strengths and challenges faced by the EWR Program.

1.2 Scope and Definitions

This evaluation covers the period from November 25, 2004, when funding for implementation was received from the Federal Government's Sustaining Community Partnerships Initiative, to March 31, 2004. Analysis of the strengths and challenges provides qualitative information that will inform program planning in subsequent seasons.

1.3 Methodology

The evaluator developed the design of this study in consultation with members of the Extreme Weather Task Group and the C/WWS Committee of the Whole. Research methods were designed to be consistent with the objectives stated above.

The consultant used various data sources in the preparation of this report including the following:

- C/WWS documents including meeting minutes
- Service statistics
- Ongoing feedback from EWR organizers
- Evaluation meetings with EWR organizers
- 8 written survey responses from EWR organizers.

This report derives both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods:

Qualitative - Review and synthesis of ongoing feedback and evaluation meetings.

Quantitative - calculation of total inputs and outputs.

2.0 Overview of the Extreme Weather Response

2.1 Background

EWR plans were developed for Surrey, Vancouver, Langley, Richmond and New Westminister in 2003. These plans set the framework for expanding community resources for homeless persons during the winter months to prevent hardships due to extreme winter weather conditions.

In Richmond, Surrey, Langley, and New Westminister the EWR Plans were developed by local steering committees. The community members involved in this planning process represented a broad array of organizations and agencies. The Cold/Wet Weather Strategy, through funding from the Federal Government's Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative, provided assistance with the planning process. In Vancouver the plan reflected the EWR that was already being implemented, primarily through funding from the Ministry of Human Resources.

2.2 Purpose & Objectives

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

The objectives of the project are to:

- Provide safe and adequate temporary extreme weather shelter for up to 190 homeless people (in Surrey, Richmond, New Westminister and Langley) during extreme winter weather (between Nov 1 and March 31);
- Provide outreach in Surrey, Richmond, New Westminister, and Langley (warm food, winter clothing and blankets) during extreme weather to those living rough who do not want to use emergency shelters;
- Co-ordinate community based co-operative approaches for all aspects of the EWR including meal provision, shelter, transportation and communication;
- Co-ordinate communication between communities implementing EWR programs;
- Foster increased public awareness about homelessness in the Lower Mainland and the potential impacts of extreme weather on the homeless;
- Develop trained volunteers to support the EWR; and,
- Increase the response's sustainability by securing ongoing funding.

The following will be among the indicators of success used to monitor this project:

- The communities will implement their EWR plans as the weather requires in a safe and effective manner;
- Homeless people in the EWR communities requiring shelter will receive it during extreme weather; and,
- Information about the extreme weather alert within the communities will be circulated quickly and effectively - homeless people will know when there is alert and what resources are available to them.

2.3 Activities

The 2003/2004 winter was the first season of implementation of EWR plans in Surrey, Richmond, Langley and New Westminster. Vancouver has been implementing an EWR for the past few years.

The only extreme weather¹ in the region this season occurred over the days between Christmas and New Years and the first few days in the new year. All extreme weather sheltering sites were open during this time. Some communities opened as little as two nights while others, especially those with additional funding sources such as MHR, were open up to eleven nights. It should be noted that Surrey, Langley and Richmond did not receive their EWR mats until the last night of the extreme weather. This limited the ability for some of these communities to undertake a response.

Additional EWR activities include:

- Generating public and media awareness about homelessness and the EWR.
- Developing media information for the EWR.
- Developing EWR Sheltering Standards.
- Initiating EWR planning for the Tri-Cities.
- Assisting with initial planning for a homeless shelter in Langley.
- Information sharing during extreme weather.
- Collection of EWR data.
- 5 Extreme Weather Task Group meetings.
- Evaluation of 2003/2004 year.

¹ Extreme weather is defined as:

- Temperatures at or below - 4 degrees Celsius (-2 with wind chill); OR
- Significant snow accumulation; AND
- Conditions deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of homeless persons.
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3.0 Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes

3.1 Program Logic Model

The following logic model chart shows inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes² for the EWR.

Inputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding provided by the Federal Government’s Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative and United Way of the Lower Mainland. 2. Community donations including, New Westminster Rotary Club and the Langley Lions. 3. In-kind contributions, including facility space, food, blankets, winter clothing, hygiene kits, and volunteer time.
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation for periods of extreme weather 2. EWR in January 2004 3. Response tracking 4. EWR planning in the Tri-Cities 5. Homeless shelter planning in Langley 6. Regular Extreme Weather Task Group meetings 7. Media relations 8. Establishing EWR standards
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of EWR beds provided 2. Number of bed/nights available 3. Occupancy rates
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

² The evaluation measures inputs, outputs, and outcomes, defined as follows:

Inputs are resources dedicated to a program, such as money, staff time, volunteer time, facilities, equipment and supplies.

Outputs are the quantities of services provided (e.g. number of people sheltered).

Outcomes are the changes for individuals or systems that resulted from the program.

3.2 Funding and in-kind resources

As shown in the table below, EWR inputs in the 2003/2004 season included funding from the federal government SCPI program, United Way of the Lower Mainland. Total funding, including cash and in-kind donations, was \$51,622.66.

Funding and in-kind sources	Communities	Amount
SCPI - Human Resources Social Development	Surrey, Richmond, Langley and New Westminster. Tri-Cities - planning only	\$23,356.00
United Way of the Lower Mainland	Surrey, Richmond, Langley and New Westminster	\$7,000.00
New Westminster Rotary Club	New Westminster	\$3,500.00
Langley Lions Club	Langley	\$300.00
In-kind community donations (shelter space, blankets, food, volunteers, hygiene kits)	Surrey, Richmond, Langley and New Westminster	\$17,466.66
TOTAL		\$51,622.66

3.2 Outputs

There were 190 beds available for the EWR program in Surrey, Richmond, Langley and New Westminster (SCPI funded). There were approximately 200 extreme weather beds available in Vancouver for EWR (MHR and community funded).

Lower Mainland Extreme Weather Response Statistics: 2003-2004

Community	Shelter Site	Date (D/M/Y)	Male 19 yrs +	Male 18 yrs -	Female 19 yrs +	Female 18 yrs -	Family	Total	Funding
New Westminster	Salvation Army	31.12.2003	8	0	2	0	0	10	CWWS
New Westminster	Salvation Army	02.01.2004	2	0	1	0	0	3	CWWS
New Westminster	Salvation Army	03.01.2004	8	0	1	0	0	9	CWWS
New Westminster	Salvation Army	04.01.2004	8	0	0	0	0	8	CWWS
New Westminster	Salvation Army	05.01.2004	6	0	1	0	0	7	CWWS
New Westminster	Salvation Army	06.01.2004	8	0	0	0	0	8	MHR
New Westminster	Salvation Army	07.01.2004	7	0	0	0	0	7	MHR
New Westminster	Salvation Army	08.01.2004	10	0	0	0	0	10	MHR
New Westminster	Salvation Army	09.01.2004	9	0	0	0	0	9	MHR
New Westminster	Salvation Army	10.01.2004	12	0	0	0	0	12	MHR
New Westminster	Salvation Army	11.01.2004	9	0	1	0	0	10	MHR
New Westminster	Purpose Society	31.12.2003	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS
New Westminster	Purpose Society	03.01.2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS
New Westminster	Purpose Society	05.01.2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS
New Westminster	Purpose Society	06.01.2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS
New Westminster	Elizabeth Fry	03.01.2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS
New Westminster	Elizabeth Fry	04.01.2004							
New Westminster	Elizabeth Fry	05.01.2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS
Langley	Brookwood Baptist	03.01.2004	1	0	0	0	0	1	CWWS
Langley	Brookwood Baptist	04.01.2004	2	0	0	0	0	2	CWWS
Langley	Brookwood Baptist	05.01.2004	4	0	0	0	0	4	CWWS
Langley	Brookwood Baptist	06.01.2004	5	0	0	0	0	5	CWWS
Langley	Aldergrove Seventh Day	03.01.2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS

Community	Shelter Site	Date (D/M/Y)	Male 19 yrs +	Male 18 yrs -	Female 19 yrs +	Female 18 yrs -	Family	Total	Funding
Langley	Aldergrove Seventh Day	04.01.2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS
Langley	Aldergrove Seventh Day	05.01.2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS
Langley	Aldergrove Seventh Day	06.01.2004	1	0	0	0	0	1	CWWS
Richmond	Salvation Army	03.01.2004	1	0	0	0	0	1	CWWS
Surrey	Surrey Urban Mission	06.01.2004	8	0	0	0	0	8	CWWS
Surrey	Hyland House	06.01.2004	2	0	1	0	0	3	CWWS
Surrey	Hyland House	07.01.2004	9	0	1	0	0	10	CWWS
Surrey	Kla How Eya	06.01.2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS
Surrey	Kla How Eya	07.01.2004	0	2	0	0	0	2	CWWS
Surrey	Johnston Heights	06.01.2004	0	0	0	0	0	0	CWWS
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	08.11.2003	16	0	2	0	0	18	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	09.11.2003	21	0	2	0	0	23	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	22.11.2003	14	0	2	0	0	16	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	23.11.2003	16	0	0	0	0	16	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	24.11.2003	21	0	1	0	0	22	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	02.01.2004	14	0	2	0	0	16	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	03.01.2004	19	0	1	0	0	20	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	04.01.2004	24	0	2	0	0	26	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	05.01.2004	31	0	1	0	0	32	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	06.01.2004	26	0	0	0	0	26	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	07.01.2004	30	0	1	0	0	31	MHR
Vancouver	Evelyne Saller	08.01.2004	34	0	1	0	0	35	MHR
Vancouver	Gathering Place	03.01.2004	6 (25+)	6 (25-)	0	2 (25-)	0	14	MHR
Vancouver	Gathering Place	04.01.2004						27	MHR
Vancouver	Gathering Place	05.01.2004						17	MHR
Vancouver	Gathering Place	06.01.2004	9 (25+)	8 (25-)	0	2 (25-)	0	19	MHR
Vancouver	Gathering Place	07.01.2004	11(25+)	10(25-)	0	3(25-)	0	24	MHR
Vancouver	Gathering Place	08.01.2004	10 (25+)	6 (25-)	0	0	0	16	MHR
Vancouver	Gathering Place	09.01.2004	12 (25+)	7 (25-)	0	0	0	19	MHR
Vancouver	Aboriginal Friendship Centre	06.01.2004						65	No funding
Vancouver	Aboriginal Friendship Centre	07.01.2004						95	No funding
Vancouver	Aboriginal Friendship Centre	08.01.2004						52	No funding
Vancouver	First Baptist	06.01.2004	31	0	0	0	0	31	

Community	Shelter Site	Date (D/M/Y)	Male 19 yrs +	Male 18 yrs -	Female 19 yrs +	Female 18 yrs -	Family	Total	Funding
Vancouver	Catholic Charities	06.01.2004	12	0	0	0	0	12	MHR 6 Archdiocese 6
Vancouver	Catholic Charities	07.01.2004	6	0	0	0	0	6	MHR
Vancouver	Catholic Charities	08.01.2004	6	0	0	0	0	6	MHR
Vancouver	Catholic Charities	09.01.2004	6	0	0	0	0	6	MHR
Vancouver	Catholic Charities	10.01.2004	6	0	0	0	0	6	MHR
Vancouver	Catholic Charities	11.01.2004	6	0	0	0	0	6	MHR

As shown in the table above, the various participating community organizations provided approximately 390 extreme weather beds in sheltering sites across the Lower Mainland.

Lower Mainland communities called EWR for the below listed number of nights:

- New Westminster - 11 nights (5 nights with SCPI funding plus an additional 6 nights with MHR funding)
- Langley - 4 nights (SCPI funding)
- Richmond - 1 night (SCPI funding)
- Surrey - 2 nights (SCPI funding)
- Vancouver - 12 nights (MHR and community funding)

832 EWR bed nights (SCPI, MHR and community funded beds) were used in the Lower Mainland during the 2003/2004 season.

- Vancouver - 702 bed nights
- New Westminster - 93 bed nights
- Surrey - 23 bed nights
- Richmond - 1 bed night
- Langley - 13 bed nights

Additional outputs included ongoing media relations, the development of an EWR media package and sheltering site standards, EWR planning in the Tri-Cities, and planning for a year-round homeless shelter in Langley.

3.3 Outcomes

General

Improved access to emergency shelter during extreme weather

During extreme weather in the past season there were 190 additional beds available outside Vancouver for EWR. While all of these spaces were not used during the EWR, homeless people did access many of the sheltering sites during extreme weather nights.

Reduced risk during extreme weather

For homeless people who stayed at the EWR sheltering sites during extreme weather, the risk of illness, hypothermia and death was reduced.

Co-ordination of sheltering services during extreme weather

Communication via email and telephone between shelter providers, social services, MHR, and the EWR sheltering sites in Vancouver, Richmond, New Westminster, Langley, and Surrey worked well during the EWR period in January 2004. Prior to that time, such a communication system did not exist outside of Vancouver.

Improved understanding of local and regional needs during extreme weather

The implementation of the EWR plans, and the response of homeless people, has helped the individual communities to understand local homelessness better. Additional EWRs will help in this process. In each community with an EWR plan the local government has also been apprised of the EWR and the outcomes connected to actual implementation.

Increased public awareness of homelessness and extreme weather

The EWR in January 2004 served to focus media attention on the issue of homeless and EWR. During the EWR, media coverage in all communities with shelter sites was high in both print and radio. Subsequent to the January 2004 EWR major media coverage of homelessness included a week-long special in the Vancouver Sun and a week long focus on CBC radio in Vancouver.

Effectiveness of the local EWR initiatives

Survey respondents were mixed in their evaluation of the EWR in their community. Most indicated that the effectiveness ranged from neutral to very high, although one respondent felt that the response was not effective. This was due primarily to the fact that the EWR was not prepared when the cold snap hit, because the mats had not yet arrived. Survey respondents made the following comments:

- We started too late. (Surrey)

- By the time the process had been completely set up and the mats had arrived, there had already been several days of extreme weather that were not responded to. (Surrey)
- They were effective as sites, but not too accessible. As the word gets out and police and bus drivers are informed, it will improve. (Langley)
- Was an experience of building trust (Langley)
- It was the first instance and was not repeated this season. By the time the extreme weather was past, we had just found our “sea legs” and did not get a chance to do more exploring. (Langley)

Survey respondents made the following suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the EWR:

- Start organizing in September/ October for a potential November cold snap. (Surrey)
- We need better publicity and consistent, easily recognized signage. (Langley)
- Better advertising. (Langley)
- A consistent “call” of when it is an extreme weather response and what should be the trigger. That hasn’t been determined. One person should make the call. (Vancouver)
- Better communications, networking for callouts. We also need a downtown location. (Langley)
- Adequate and affordable permanent housing and a change in public/private priorities in housing policy. (Vancouver)
- More communication regarding area shelters, which are turning away people during extreme weather to second stage shelters. (Vancouver)

Sustainability of the local EWRs

Survey respondents rated their community’s ability to sustain the EWR beyond the next two years between very high and neutral. Respondents added the following comments:

- Depends on who would step up to help organize.
- It will be easier if we continue to get help.
- As long as the media is supporting us and getting the word out, our community (family and friends etc...) will help out with clothes and food.
- City of Vancouver funds the Gathering Place and Evelyne Saller. While Evelyne Saller has a budget for 109 days annually, the Gathering Place I understand does not. Thus the Gathering Place doesn’t open all the time and the Evelyne Saller Centre does.
- Just starting to set up a fund raising system within the community.
- Don’t know, depends on funding and that seems to be a very iffy proposition right now.
- The community response to the initiative was extremely positive; we received donations of goods and volunteer time.

When respondents were asked what would help make the EWR more sustainable they made the following suggestions:

- Share resources with other shelters (not funds) but materials such as extra mats or cots.
- Political mobilization to put it high on the public agenda.
- Hopefully a couple of years' activity will make the program more viable, as the community becomes more aware.
- Donations of mats that could be kept in storage in the "off" season. The scramble for blankets, mats, pillows, etc... on an annual basis is a bit frustrating.
- Awareness to the community.
- Ongoing facilitation.
- Solid training.
- Familiarity with the program.
- Continued support from the community and the private sector. Donations of staff time from trained personnel.

4.0 Strengths and Challenges

End of the 2003/2004 season meetings and telephone discussions with EWR community groups and leaders provided the following insights on the first year of operation of the EWR.

Strengths:

- During extreme weather events sheltering sites received many donations of goods from their local communities.
- Media coverage in all communities with EWR plans was high during the extreme weather event. It led to a broad media interest in homelessness and served to significantly raise public awareness about homelessness.
- Ministry of Human Resources provided additional funds for extreme weather to shelters throughout the Lower Mainland. Some of these dollars went to the extreme weather sheltering site in New Westminster.
- Some extreme weather community groups have continued to fund raise locally for additional dollars to support their initiatives.
- Volunteer rates at church-run sheltering sites was high.

- Region-wide communication during the extreme weather event via email worked well and helped to keep many people “in the loop”.
- Funding for bus tickets and taxis provided by the C/WWS assisted with transportation challenges.
- Tri-Cities now in planning stages for an EWR
- Langley now in the planning stages for a year-round shelter. Currently there is no shelter in the community.

Challenges:

- Communication amongst the EWR co-ordinators in each community was problematic over the holiday season.
- Getting information out in a timely manner to the homeless and those who serve them was difficult.
- Sheltering site use in some communities was low.
- Sheltering sites developed particularly for women and youth received low use.
- Mats ordered from the US took approximately six weeks to arrive. They were almost too late for the 2003/2004 extreme weather event.
- Invoices from each extreme weather group needed to be amended to meet the needs of the bookkeeper at South Fraser Community Services.
- Communication was limited or nonexistent with organizations, which opened sheltering sites outside of the EWR program (e.g. Aboriginal Friendship Centre in Vancouver and The Gentle Shepherd in Surrey). This made it difficult to know what was occurring in each community during extreme weather.

5.0 Recommendations

- Continue to foster communication amongst the organizations providing EWR across the Lower Mainland.
- Draw up holiday contingency plans for each community. These plans would include the names and contact numbers for the people replacing those on holidays.
- Develop better signage in all communities. Use the C/WWS logo, bright colours, minimal text, contact phone number.
- Re-establish communication with emergency services at the beginning of the next winter season.
- Develop a standardized invoice form for all EWR community groups to use.
- Make community presentations in the fall to build community awareness of the program - so people know about the program ahead of time.
- Develop information materials to help raise awareness about the EWR early in the season.
- Build relationships and initiate communication with organizations setting up sheltering sites outside of the EWR program.