

VANCOUVER 2007/2008 EXTREME WEATHER RESPONSE PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

This latest version of the Vancouver Extreme Weather Response Plan for the Homeless represents an evolving strategy for coordinating the response in the Vancouver Community and overcoming challenges encountered in previous years. Expanding upon last year's plan, it documents the framework for extending resources to homeless persons to prevent hardship due to extreme (fall and winter) weather conditions.

The 2007/2008 Vancouver Extreme Weather Response has been developed through the involvement and efforts of the following organizations and people:

- Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy
- BC Housing
- City of Vancouver
- Lookout Emergency Aid Society
- First Baptist Church
- Evelyne Saller Centre
- The Gathering Place
- St. Mark's Extreme Weather Shelter
- Grandview Calvary Baptist Church
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- St. James Community Service Society
- Covenant House
- The Salvation Army
- Mary MacDougall, Regional EWR Coordinator
- Grant Gayman, Sub-Regional Vancouver EWR Coordinator

2. THE CURRENT HOMELESSNESS SITUATION

The most recent Metro Vancouver 24-Hour Homelessness Snapshot (completed in March 2005) estimated that there were 1,297 homeless Vancouver people. That included 700-sheltered homeless and 591 street homeless for a total of 63% of the regional homeless population. In addition, there were 44,205 people living in at-risk households in Vancouver (34% of all people living in at-risk households in the region). Those numbers were generally accepted as conservative estimates at the time, as they did not fully include those who slip through cracks in the social services system. There is every reason to believe that these numbers have increased to date. It is hoped that any data collected through this year's Extreme Weather Response Program will add to the overall knowledge of homelessness in Vancouver.

Regular Shelter Capacity

There are currently 686 year-round hostel and shelter beds in the City of Vancouver. During fall and winter months (October/November to March 31), an additional 60 cold/wet weather beds become available, for a total of 746 beds/mats.

Turn-Aways

Monthly turn-away figures help provide some indication of the level of response required when an extreme weather alert is called. They indicate where the current shelter system is not meeting the current community need. The following table presents the turn-away rates for some of the shelters located in Vancouver's DTES during the winter months between November 2006 and March 2007. While this is not a complete tally, representing only one neighbourhood, it does provide an indication of the levels of turn-aways in the community and the need for an extreme weather response.

Table: Turn-aways at Vancouver DTES Shelters

Month	Anchor of Hope (50 beds)	The Beacon (60 beds)	The Crosswalk (35 beds)	MONTHLY TOTALS
Nov 2006	20	94	??	114+
Dec 2006	51	104	15	170
Jan 2007	137	239	45	421
Feb 2007	106	112	45	263
Mar 2007	262	137	138	537

2006-07 Extreme Weather Response

A far more telling picture of the continued need for an Extreme Weather Response is presented by the statistics from the 2006-07 season. Last year, Extreme Weather Alerts were issued on 39 nights between October 29, 2006 and March 2, 2007. A total of 3,147 bed nights of shelter were provided, **an increase of 95.1 % over the previous year.**

The Broader Homeless Population

In addition to the homeless who seek shelter through the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance or through self-referral, there are those in the homeless population who do not seek admission into either year-round or cold/wet weather shelters. The desire to live outside of the formal shelter system stems from a varied and complex range of reasons including addictions, distrust of the social services system and government in general, and mental health issues, to name a few. While there is no clear estimate of the size of this broader homeless population, the Extreme Weather Response Plan must

anticipate that many of these homeless persons will be forced to seek shelter when conditions worsen.

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. To meet these criteria, the Vancouver EWR Plan involves a range of options and levels of response.

Extreme Weather Alerts

Until last year, Extreme Weather Alerts were called on a facility-by-facility basis. This year, calling an Extreme Weather Alert is again the responsibility of the Sub-Regional EWR Coordinator following consultation, whenever possible, with members of the Vancouver EWR Community Committee .

An Alert will be called when weather conditions are deemed **severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of homeless persons**. Factors taken into account include:

- Temperatures near zero with rainfall that makes it difficult or impossible for homeless people to remain dry; and/or
- Sleet/freezing rain; and/or
- Snow accumulation; and/or
- Sustained high winds; and/or
- Temperatures at or below -2 degrees Celsius.

Feedback from clientele of the various facilities may also be considered.

The sub-regional coordinator is also responsible, again following consultation with members of the Committee, to decide which facility or facilities will be open on a given night. It is most likely that not all extreme weather facilities with capacity to open will do so on the same night. This will allow for rotation of which facilities are open which nights in case of an extended period of Extreme Weather.

Vancouver Extreme Weather Shelters

During extreme weather the following facilities may be opened:

- **First Baptist Church** (969 Burrard St)
During extreme weather the facility opens between 10:00 pm and 7:00 am. Up to 35 people can be sheltered in the gym. People are provided with blankets and mats to sleep on and food and beverages are provided in the evening and in the morning.
Contact: Brad Steyn
- **Evelyne Saller Centre** (320 Alexander Street)
During extreme weather the centre opens between midnight and 7:00 am. The Centre can accommodate up to 40 people. People are provided with a blanket for the night and they receive a light snack before going to sleep and coffee, toast and jam in the morning.
Contacts: Ernie Leffler and Jacques Masse

- **The Gathering Place** (609 Helmken St)
 During extreme weather the facility opens between midnight and 7:00 am. Up to 40 people can be sheltered in the theatre space at the facility. People are provided with blankets and mats to sleep on and food and beverages are provided in the evening and in the morning.
 Contacts: Jennifer Standeven and Jo-Ann Stevens
- **St. Mark's Extreme Weather Shelter** (1805 Larch St)
 Operating from St. Mark's Anglican Church, this facility can accommodate up to 25 people and will be open between 9:30 pm and 7:00 am.
 Contact: Penny Rogers
- **Grandview Calvary Baptist Church** (1803 East 1st Avenue)
 Their "Out of the Cold" program offers a meal on Thursday night followed by an overnight shelter for up to 30 people with breakfast in the morning.
 Contact: Andrew Thistlethwaite
 The Church also operates a Friday and Saturday nights shelter program, open from 10:00 pm to 7:00 am, capacity: 25 people. Coffee and a snack will be provided in the morning.
 Contact: Jordan Hankinson
- **Powell Place** (329a Powell St.)
 St. James Community Service Society operates 6 beds for women, open from 11:30 pm to 7:30 am. A meal is provided upon intake and a light breakfast or "take-away" breakfast is given in the morning.
 Contacts: Kathy Stringer and Coretta Peets
- **The Salvation Army Harbour Light** (119 East Cordova St.)
 Can accommodate up to 50 people. People receive mats, pillows and blankets. Coffee and a snack are provided in the morning. This shelter will only open if there is sufficient overflow from Harbour Light's year-round and CWW shelters.
 Contact: Grant Gayman
- **The Salvation Army Belkin House** (555 Homer St.)
 Can accommodate 15 men and 5 women. Opens after other shelters full after 11:00 pm. Breakfast is served at 7:30 am.
 Contact: Bill Bowden
- **Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society** (1607 E. Hastings St)
 The VAFCS will provide mats for between 50 and 100 people. The Centre is open between 7:00 pm and 7:00 am. Sandwiches and hot drinks are provided in the evening. Coffee/tea, a light snack and a bus ticket are given out on departure in the morning.
 Administrative contact: Nicole Gutowski
 Shelter contacts: Duane Howard or John Alden
- **Covenant House** (575 Drake St)
 Operates an evening drop-in centre between 7 and 10:30. Will provide overnight accommodation on mats for up to 16 youths (16-24 yrs) at 11:00 pm. An evening hot meal and breakfast are provided.
 Contact: On-shift Team Leader

Outreach

Lookout Emergency Aid Society has an outreach team that works in the community and publicizes any extreme weather response.

Notification

In addition to service providers, outreach workers and BC Housing, a wide range of drop-in centres, community centres, health centres and government and service agencies will be notified when Alerts are called and the names and addresses of facilities that will be open.

Media Inquiries

Extreme Weather facilities are encouraged to direct **all** media enquiries to Mary MacDougall, Metro Vancouver Regional EWR Coordinator. Alternatively: Grant Gayman, Vancouver Sub-Regional EWR Coordinator

Timeframe

The (fall and winter) extreme weather response can be implemented between October 15th and March 31st. It is anticipated that Alerts will be issued intermittently and for varying lengths during this period as weather conditions and need dictate. Last year, Extreme Weather Alerts were issued for a total of 39 nights between October 29, 2006 and March 2, 2007, a 34% increase from 2005-06. There was an unbroken stretch of 8 days in late November, and 10 continuous days in early to mid-January. On 27 of the 39 EWR nights at least 2 shelters were open, on 6 different nights 5 shelters were open, and on 2 additional nights 6 shelters were open.

Deactivation

Each EWR facility is encouraged to have a pre-determined plan on how and when they will close. Some facilities in Vancouver have a one or two-day closing process to give their clientele some warning and time to make other arrangements. Facilities are encouraged to inform the Vancouver EWR Coordinator of their plans to close and the reasons for closing as these decisions are made so he can inform other EWR partners as necessary.

It is understood that due to different micro-climates and different levels of on-going services for homeless people in different neighbourhoods within Vancouver, some EWR facilities may remain open after others have closed.

Evaluation & Plan Revision

This plan has been developed for the 2007-08 fall and winter period. It is anticipated that following March 31, 2008, the Vancouver EWR Community Committee will reconvene to assess the implementation of the plan over the season and to consider future amendments.

To assist with the evaluation process, EWR facilities will collect and submit usage data to BC Housing on a daily basis following each EWR opening.