



VANCOUVER EXTREME WEATHER RESPONSE PLAN 2017-18

OCTOBER 2017
(updated November 2017)

GREATER VANCOUVER SHELTER STRATEGY SOCIETY



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Vancouver 2017/2018 Extreme Weather Response Plan

Introduction

The Extreme Weather Response (EWR) program is an initiative that “funds community based services to provide temporary emergency shelter spaces during periods of extreme winter weather which threaten the health and safety of homeless individuals. This program is designed to provide time-limited, weather responsive, temporary shelter spaces in communities where there is not sufficient emergency shelter bed capacity during extreme weather conditions.”¹ Community members, congregations from faith groups and advocates work together to provide safe refuge and hospitality in addition to emergency shelter. The expected outcomes of the EWR program are decreased health and safety risks to homeless people during periods of extreme winter weather, and a reduction of street homelessness during extreme winter weather.

The Vancouver EWR plan covers the municipality of the City of Vancouver.

Community Partners

Those involved in the development and implementation of the current EWR program are:

- Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy Society
- BC Housing
- City of Vancouver
- 10th Avenue Alliance Church
- Catholic Charities Men’s Hostel
- Directions Youth Services Centre
- Evelyne Saller Centre
- First Baptist Church
- The Gathering Place
- St Mark’s Extreme Weather Shelter
- The Salvation Army Belkin House
- The Salvation Army Harbour Light
- Union Gospel Mission

2016/2017 EWR Season Summary

The shelters for the 2016/17 EWR season were located at:

- Catholic Charities Men’s Hostel (82 Cambie St) for up to 20 men*
- First Baptist Church (969 Burrard St) for up to 25 people Mondays through Thursdays
- The Gathering Place (609 Helmcken St) for up to 40 people Fridays through Sundays*
- St Mark’s Extreme Weather Shelter (1805 Larch St) for up to 25 people
- Union Gospel Mission (601 East Hastings St) for up to 20 people
- Directions Youth Services Centre (1138 Burrard St) for up to 18 youth

¹ BC Housing. (2011). Extreme Weather Response Program Framework 2nd Edition.

Overflow/back up shelters were located at:

- The Salvation Army Belkin House (555 Homer St) for up to 13 men and 7 women
- The Salvation Army Harbour Light (119 East Cordova St) for up to 40 people*
- Evelyne Saller Centre (320 Alexander St) for up to 40 people

*The EWR beds in these shelters converted to temporary winter shelter status and remained open nightly beginning in December through to the end of March.

Occupancy Comparisons

EWR Site	2012-13 Total Spaces Used	2013-14 Total Spaces Used	2014-15 Total Spaces Used	2015-16 Total Spaces Used	2016-17 Total Spaces Used
10 th Avenue Alliance	113	429	248	n/a	n/a
Catholic Charities	75	390	374	364	373
Directions YSC	n/a	272	166	148	448
First Baptist Church	102	282	210	124	545
The Gathering Place	102	98	93	114	327
St Mark’s EWS	81	251	202	187	801
Union Gospel Mission	0	60	66	53	133
Belkin House	0	0	11	9	592
Harbour Light	97	348	43	236	649
Evelyne Saller Centre	0	0	0	0	761
TOTAL	570	2,130	1,413	1,235	4,629

Operations Analysis

There were 74 nights during which Extreme Weather Alerts (EWAs) were activated in 2016/17. This was a significant increase from the previous two seasons with 22 nights in 2015/16 and 23 nights during 2014/15. The activations began October 12, 2016 and went through to the end of March. Across the season for Vancouver, the average occupancy was 56% (an increase from 43% in the previous season). The increase in occupancy rates may be attributed to the high number of EWR activations and the fact that sites were open more than one night so individuals seeking shelter knew they could return.

Current Homelessness Situation in Vancouver

The results of the March 2017 Point-in-Time Homeless Count¹ identified 2,138 respondents in Vancouver who were experiencing homelessness (1,601 sheltered and 537 unsheltered). While recognizing that ‘point in time’ counts provide a 24 hour ‘snapshot’ and likely do not capture all individuals experiencing homelessness, there was a 19% increase in Vancouver between the previous regional count in 2014 and 2017 count and a 30% increase in the number of individuals experiencing

¹ Prepared for the Metro Vancouver Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Entity by BC Non-Profit Housing Association and M. Thompson Consulting. See full report here: <http://www.metrovancouver.org/homelessness>

homelessness across the region which represents the highest number to date.

As shown below, the trend in homeless numbers in Vancouver has increased since 2005. Between 2016 and 2017, there was a slight decrease in those that responded to the survey that were unsheltered on the night of the count and an increase in those staying in shelters. This was likely due to the additional temporary winter shelter beds opened in 2016/2017, as well as it being the first year EWR was activated on the night on the count which provided additional opportunities for people to come inside.



Vancouver Extreme Weather Program 2017/18

The Vancouver Committee met to discuss criteria for calling an Extreme Weather Alert (EWA) and it was agreed that the criteria for calling an EWA include:

- Temperatures near zero with rainfall that makes it difficult or impossible for those experiencing homelessness to remain dry; and/or
- Sleet/freezing rain; and/or
- Snow accumulation; and/or
- Sustained high winds; and/or
- Temperatures at or below 0°C; or 'feels like' 0°C with the wind chill; and/or
- Rainfall of at least 50mm in a 24-hour period.

The designated community representative for issuing EWAs alerts will be Chloe Good (Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy Society) with support and oversight provided by Celine Mauboules, Executive Director for the Homelessness Services Association of BC(HSABC).² The EWAs will be issued in consultation with other members of the Vancouver EWR committee to determine the timing of issuing EWAs and which facilities will be open during the alert. At minimum, mats and blankets are provided at all EWR sites.

² GVSS and ShelterNetBC are in the final stages of a merger process that will result in the creation of HSABC.

Vancouver EWR Sites

During EWAs the facilities below may be opened. It should be noted that BC Housing, the City of Vancouver and service providers are finalizing negotiations to deliver Temporary Winter Shelter beds and some of the facilities below may again be open daily over season. GVSS staff will also continue working with the community to identify additional beds to ensure capacity exists to serve those in need during EWR.

Directions Youth Services Centre

1138 Burrard St, across from St Paul's hospital

Will provide overnight accommodation 15 youth (24 year of age and under). Sign up is at 10:00 pm for EWR program. EWR mats are put away at 7:00 am. Mats provided after midnight. Pets accepted to a maximum of four (4) animals.

Contact: Ryan or Nicki (604-633-1472 and Press 1)

First Baptist Church

969 Burrard St

During extreme weather alerts Mondays through Thursdays the facility opens between 9:00 pm and 7:00 am. Up to 25 people can be sheltered in the gym. People are provided with food and beverages are provided in the evening and in the morning. Will accommodate couples and families as able.

Contact: Thomas Nairne (604-683-8441)

Back Up Sites

The Salvation Army Belkin House

555 Homer St

Can accommodate 13 men and 7 women. Opens after other shelters full after 11:00 pm. Breakfast is served at 7:30 am.

Contact: Caro Lander (604-694-6628)

Evelyne Saller Centre

320 Alexander St

Can accommodate up to 40 people. Operates between midnight and 7:00am. People a light snack before going to sleep and coffee, toast and jam in the morning.

Contact: Erika Di Salvo (604-665-3075)

Issuing Activations and De-Activations of EWAs

Activation

When an EWA is called, the community representative will email the Metro Vancouver EWR Coordinator, Vancouver EWR sites and outreach, the City of Vancouver, health contacts and the following contacts provided by BC Housing:

Maria Rodrigo mrodrigo@bchousing.org
Dominic Flanagan dflanagan@bchousing.org
Bruk Melles bmelles@bchousing.org
Daisy Stapleton dstaplet@bchousing.org
Paul Woolley Paul.Woolley@gov.bc.ca
Darren Harbord Darren.harbord@gov.bc.ca
Brenda Prosken bprosken@bchousing.org
bchceo@bchousing.org
CommsEWR@bchousing.org
HomelessnessServices@bchousing.org
weatheralert@gov.bc.ca

This email will inform of the sites that will open and estimated opening duration. A process for making phone contact for evenings, weekends and holidays are in place. Extreme Weather notifications will trigger the Assistance to Shelter Act, and emails noting the alert will specify this fact, according to the format provided by BC Housing.

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.

Deactivations will also be issued by email, according to the format provided by BC Housing, to the contacts outlined in the Activation process.

Reporting

EWR sites will submit statistics on EWR shelter usage to BC Housing in their approved format by 11:00 am on the next business day after they have opened on each day of an EWA. The EWR sites will also report to the Vancouver EWR Coordinator the number of people brought to shelter by police (both voluntarily and involuntarily).

Media

Media inquiries relating to both Vancouver and Metro Vancouver EWR issues should be directed to Celine Mauboules, Executive Director, Homelessness Services Association of BC (604) 817.8218.

Community representatives will contact Celine Mauboules, and BC Housing's Communications staff should any issues arise that require a coordinated media response between communities arise. Any media releases about EWR must be forwarded in draft form to the regional representative and BC Housing's Communications Branch for comments and final approval before release.

Email:

Regional Representative: Maria Maria Rodrigo mrodrigo@bchousing.org

AND all contacts below:

Monday to Friday:

Rajvir Rao rrao@bchousing.org

Weekend: media@bchousing.org

Evaluation

The Vancouver EWR Program will be evaluated against BC Housing's EWR Program Principles which include:

- Core services are accessible and client-focused
- Transparent and accountable operations
- A welcoming, safe and secure service environment
- A collaborative and innovative sector environment

The outcomes against which the Vancouver EWR Program will be evaluated are:

- Reduce health and safety risks to homeless people related to extreme winter weather exposure
- Reduce street homelessness during extreme winter weather

The Extreme Weather Planning Group will reconvene before May 31, to assess the implementation of the current Response Plan and to amend it as required for the following season.