



VANCOUVER  
EXTREME  
WEATHER  
RESPONSE  
PLAN 2016-17

OCTOBER 2016

GREATER VANCOUVER SHELTER STRATEGY SOCIETY

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# Vancouver 2016/2017 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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
- 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue Alliance Church
- Catholic Charities Men’s Hostel
- Directions Youth Services Centre
- Evelyne Saller Centre
- First Baptist Church
- The Gathering Place
- Lookout Emergency Aid Society
- St Mark’s Extreme Weather Shelter
- The Salvation Army Belkin House
- The Salvation Army Harbour Light
- Union Gospel Mission

## 2015/2016 EWR Season Summary

The shelters for the 2014/15 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

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<sup>1</sup> BC Housing. (2011). Extreme Weather Response Program Framework 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

#### Occupancy Comparisons

<b>EWR Site</b>	<b>2012-13 Total Spaces Used</b>	<b>2013-14 Total Spaces Used</b>	<b>2014-15 Total Spaces Used</b>	<b>2015-16 Total Spaces Used</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Alliance	113	429	248	n/a
Catholic Charities	75	390	374	364
Directions YSC	n/a	272	166	148
First Baptist Church	102	282	210	124
The Gathering Place	102	98	93	114
St Mark's EWS	81	251	202	187
Union Gospel Mission	0	60	66	53
Belkin House	0	0	11	9
Harbour Light	97	348	43	236
Evelyne Saller Centre	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>2,130</b>	<b>1,413</b>	<b>1,235</b>

#### Operations Analysis

There were 22 nights during which Extreme Weather Alerts (EWAs) were activated in 2015/16, almost the same as the 23 nights during 2014/15. These alerts were called between November 2015 and the beginning of January 2016 with no alerts called during February and March 2016.

The majority of shelters saw similar occupancy to the previous year with most slightly lower occupancy percentages. Across the season for Vancouver, the average occupancy was 43%. The one shelter that saw a dramatic increase in occupancy was Harbour Light. However, this may be due to the availability of additional shelter beds available at Harbour Light during the 2014/15 season that were not available in 2015/16. When the 2015/16 numbers for Harbour Light are compared to the 2013/14, they are comparable.

It is noted that while it did not impact EWR openings, both Directions Youth Services Centre and Union Gospel Mission were transitioned from regular EWR service delivery to "winter shelter" service delivery, making the spaces that would typically be available during EWR open each day. In observing the impact of the changed openings on service use, both Directions and UGM indicated that while they had seen low occupancy in their spaces while operating as EWR spaces, both sites ran close to maximum occupancy when the transitioned to daily opening. It is recognized that this occurrence may be telling for EWR and ongoing conversations may be needed to identify the relevance for EWR service delivery.

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<sup>2</sup>Thomson, M. (2016). Vancouver Homeless Count 2016.

## Current Homelessness Situation in Vancouver

The results of the March 2016 Point-in-Time Homeless Count<sup>2</sup> determined that the number of people experiencing homelessness in Vancouver has ranged between just under 1,600 to just over 1,800 between 2010 and 2016 (1,847 in 2015). Since 2005, the general trend for the homeless count shows a slight increase across the period and those who did not have shelter in 2016 on the night of the count has remained relatively stable over the last three counts, at 539 for 2016, demonstrating ongoing need for additional shelter beds.

## Vancouver Extreme Weather Program 2016/17

The Vancouver Committee met to discuss criteria for calling an Extreme Weather Alert (EWA). A single change to the criteria was made, to include criteria regarding substantial rainfall.

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; and/or
- Rainfall of at least 50mm in a 24 hour period

The designated community representative for issuing EWAs will be Rebecca Bell (Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy Society) with GVSS program staff acting as backup for issuing the alerts. 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.

## Vancouver EWR Sites

During EWAs the following facilities may be opened:

### **Catholic Charities**

828 Cambie Street

Can accommodate up to 24 men. Extreme Weather program will open at 4 pm and mats go out at 8 pm. Extreme weather program closes at 8 am. Over the Christmas holiday week through to New Year's the Extreme Weather beds will be open 24/7. Food, showers and laundry are provided.

Contact: On-shift staff (604-443-3292)

### **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)

**The Gathering Place**

609 Helmcken St

During extreme weather alerts on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays 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 food and beverages are provided in the evening and in the morning. Will accommodate couples and families as able.

Contact: Jo-Ann Stevens (604-665-2391)

**St Mark's Extreme Weather Shelter**

1805 Larch St @ 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave

Operating from St. Mark's Anglican Church, this facility can accommodate up to 25 people. Will accommodate couples and families as able. Opens at 9:30 pm. Hot meal on intake. Carts stored inside. Dogs accepted.

Contact: Shelter telephone after 9:15 pm (778-990-1401)

**Tenth Alliance Church**

11 10<sup>th</sup> Ave W @ Ontario

Can accommodate up to 25 people. Open 10:00 pm to 7:00 am. Light snacks and showers available. Small carts can be stored inside. Will accommodate couples and families as able.

Contact: Karen Giesbrecht (604-876-2181 ext. 125)

**Union Gospel Mission**

601 East Hastings St

20 spaces for men will be made available if the regular 72 shelter beds become full. Hours are 9:00 pm until 6:00 am. People can come in for a meal at 5:30 pm and stay until extreme weather shelter opens at 9:00 pm. Breakfast is available for EWR clients. Unable to accept couples and youth under 19.

Contact: Rene Gallegos (604-253-3323)

**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)

**The Salvation Army Harbour Light**

134 East Cordova St

Can accommodate up to 40 people. People receive mats, pillows and blankets. Coffee and a snack are provided in the morning and evening. This shelter will only open if there is sufficient overflow from Harbour Light’s year-round and CWW shelters.

Contact: Don Sikstrom or Kevin Hawken (604-968-5115)

**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)

**Outreach**

The Lookout Emergency Aid Society Vancouver Outreach team operating out of the Downtown Housing Centre will broadcast alerts and response locations.

**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, health contacts and the following contacts provided by BC Housing:

Maria Rodrigo [mrodrigo@bchousing.org](mailto:mrodrigo@bchousing.org)

Dominic Flanagan [dflanagan@bchousing.org](mailto:dflanagan@bchousing.org)

Bruk Melles [bmelles@bchousing.org](mailto:bmelles@bchousing.org)

Paul Woolley [Paul.Woolley@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Paul.Woolley@gov.bc.ca)

Darren Harbord [Darren.harbord@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Darren.harbord@gov.bc.ca)

Brenda Prosken [bprosken@bchousing.org](mailto:bprosken@bchousing.org)

[bchceo@bchousing.org](mailto:bchceo@bchousing.org)

[CommsEWR@bchousing.org](mailto:CommsEWR@bchousing.org)

[HomelessnessServices@bchousing.org](mailto:HomelessnessServices@bchousing.org)

[weatheralert@gov.bc.ca](mailto: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 Rebecca Bell, Metro Vancouver EWR Coordinator at (604) 317-2654.

Should an issue of a sensitive nature, or requiring a coordinated media response between communities, the community representative will contact BC Housing's Communications representatives.

## 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.