

Langley Extreme Weather Response Plan

1. Introduction

The Langley 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 Langley Homelessness Steering Committee and its members continue to be responsible for the Extreme Weather Response. The Extreme Cold Weather Response is under the auspices of BC Housing as part of their mandate for Emergency Shelter provisions in the province of British Columbia. The community members involved in the Extreme Weather Response represent a broad array of organizations and agencies. They include:

Community organizations

- The Salvation Army
- Stepping Stone Community Services
- Ishtar Transition Housing Society
- Langley Family Services
- Brookwood Baptist Church
- Southgate Church
- Langley Evangelical Free Church
- Christian Life Assembly (CLA)

Municipal

- Langley Emergency Program
- City of Langley
- Township of Langley
- RCMP

Provincial

- Ministry of Employment Services and Income Assistance
- BC Housing
- BC Ambulance
- Ministry for Child and Family Development
- Langley Health Services

2. The Current Homelessness Situation

Homeless Shelters

At present there are no emergency shelter beds for the homeless in Langley. Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance staff refer homeless people in Langley to shelters in Abbotsford, Surrey, New Westminster, and Vancouver. Bus tickets are usually provided to get to these shelters. However, not all people who are referred to shelters outside of the community actually travel to the shelter that they have been referred to.

The Homeless Count

At the present time it is difficult to get an accurate count of the homeless population in the City and Township of Langley. A portion of the homeless population is fluid, moving from one Fraser Valley community to another in search of opportunity. They do not stay in place long enough to be noticed or counted. In addition there are few places where the homeless congregate in Langley, for the most part they are dispersed throughout the large and partly rural community. Due to the associated stigma, community members who are homeless strive to remain low profile and not attract attention.

The current homeless count in the Langleys is between 90 and 115 persons. Identification of some 84 persons is definite with unknown numbers of those who are transient or not observed.

The Broader Homeless Population

In addition to the homeless who seek shelter through the Ministry of Employment or Income Assistance or through self-referral there are those in the homeless population who do not seek admission into shelters. There are some areas in the City and Township where the homeless will sleep outdoors, such as under bridges, in private garages, and in cardboard recycling dumpsters. While there is no clear estimate of the size of this broader homeless population, the Extreme Weather Response Plan must take their needs into account as well.

There are several agencies that provide food in the community. They include Local food banks (in Langley and Aldergrove and at the Langley Salvation Army) and soup kitchens (St Joseph's and St Ann's) in the City and Township of Langley. There are several evening and weekend events each week that provide meals for homeless persons.

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 over 18, seniors, and families) in the community and be flexible enough to deal with a varying number of people. To meet these criteria, the following response has been developed.

Extreme Weather Alert

Extreme weather is defined as:

- Temperatures at or below - 4 degrees Celsius OR
- Significant snow accumulation; AND
- Conditions deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of homeless persons.

Activation Team

The following people, or their designate will decide when to call an extreme weather alert. They will make the determination based on weather reports and the perceived need for shelter space in the community.

- Gary Johnson and Andrea Voss at The Salvation Army
- Bill Strain, Brookwood Baptist Church
- Janet Bennett, Southgate Church
- Sue Wrede, Langley Evangelical Free Church
- Fraser Holland, Outreach Worker-Stepping Stones

Notification

The table below lists the 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. These organizations will also receive information about how to get access to donated winter clothing and blankets, which can be provided to homeless clients on an as needed basis.

Organization	Name
Langley Memorial Hospital	Psychiatric Nurse Clinician Jamie-Social Worker in Psychiatry
BC Ambulance Service	Charge Dispatcher
City of Langley Recreation, Culture and Community Services Timms Community Centre Langley City Fire Rescue	Leslie Hobbs (Kim Hilton On Mat leave) Staff Chief
Langley Township Fire Rescue Parks and Recreation	Chief Doug Wade Kurt Holden
Langley Emergency Program Coordinator	Ginger Sherlock
RCMP	Watch Commander
Langley Family Services	Bill Darnell
Mental Health Services	Betty Hansen
Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance After Hours (evenings and weekends)	Karen Waldon & Marcel Chartier
Langley & Aldergrove Foodbanks	Annette/George
Christian Life Assembly – Acts of Kindness	Troy Gaglardi
Stepping Stone Community Service Society	Maureen Joyce
FAYSS - Family and Youth Services Society	Paul Rypkema

The Response

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

- Gary Johnson and Andrea Voss at The Salvation Army will co-ordinate the response and send out facsimile and email notifications.
- Timms Community Centre, 20355 Douglas Crescent, will be the information centre for people looking for shelter).
- Temporary overnight emergency shelter will be provided at the following church:

Evangelical Free Church
20719 48th Avenue
Langley, BC

Timeframe

The extreme weather response is implemented:

- Between November 1 and March 31
- Intermittently (approximately 5 - 10 times a year) during the five-month period as weather conditions, need, and funding dictate.

Hours of Operation

- Night-time shelter generally between 7:00 pm and 7:00 am.

4. Evaluation & Plan Revision

This plan has been developed for the 2007/2008 Winter period. After March 31, 2008, the Extreme Weather Planning Group will reconvene under the direction of the Langley Homelessness Steering Committee to assess the implementation of the plan and to amend the plan as required. As part of the evaluation procedure, data collected by the organizations involved in the response will be collated and submitted to BC Housing every morning after the shelters were open.

Activation Protocol

1. Members of the Activation Team should monitor the weather during the winter month (November 1-March 31).
2. When extreme weather ¹ is predicted, members of the Activation Team should discuss calling an alert. This process can be initiated by any member of the Activation Team but the final decision should involve as many of the Team members as possible.
3. The decision should be based upon the weather conditions, the perceived need in the community and the availability of staff, volunteers, and temporary shelter facilities.
4. Once a decision has been made to call an Extreme Weather Alert and open temporary shelters then The Salvation Army will send out email and fax notifications to key organizations and people in the community letting them know that an alert has been called.
5. Timms Community Centre staff will direct people to the shelters, in person or by telephone (604-514-5940). They will also distribute bus tickets for people who need transportation to the shelter.
6. Signs will be posted in the following locations letting people know that an alert has been called:

LOCATION	POSTED BY
Timms Community Centre	Centre Staff
Two Aldergrove Locations	Devlyn Putsie
St Joseph's Catholic Church	
Langley Bus Depot	
Stepping Stone	Maureen Joyce

7. Extreme Weather Alerts will be called on a daily basis by noon if possible. Shelters will be closed during the day.
8. When the alert is over, The Salvation Army will send out a “stand down” notice to the Notification List letting people know that the shelters will not be open for the upcoming night.

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- Significant snow accumulation; AND
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