

City of Victoria Extreme Weather



Contents

Introduction	3
Background - Applicable Legislation, policies and plans.....	3
Assistance to Shelter Act (ASA).....	3
Emergency Program Act, Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation	3
Extreme Weather Response Program Framework, 2011	4
BC Housing Extreme Weather Response Policy, 2008.....	5
BC Health and Smoke Exposure (HASE) Coordination Committee Guideline (BCCDC)	5
Definitions.....	5
Extreme weather conditions.....	5
Extreme Weather Response Plan	5
Warming Centre.....	5
Cooling Centre.....	5
Emergency.....	6
Roles and Responsibilities.....	6
BC Housing	6
Local Authority.....	6
The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH)	6
Police.....	7
Emergency Management BC.....	7
Salvation Army Community Response Unit (CRU).....	7
Activation Criteria	8
Warming Centres	8
Cooling Centres.....	9
Warming Centre Activation Flow Chart.....	11
Cooling Centre Activation Flow Chart.....	12

Introduction

The City of Victoria is committed to ensuring all residents have a safe place to come inside, particularly during the cold winter months and other extreme weather such as heat waves and wildfire smoke conditions. BC Housing is responsible for and manages the activation of the Extreme Weather Response Plan (EWRP) and shelters beginning on November 1 annually. BC Housing's Greater Victoria Extreme Weather Response Plan represents a strategy for coordinating the response in the Greater Victoria area to meet the overnight shelter needs of unhoused persons during times of extreme weather. It documents the framework for extending resources in order to prevent hardship and incorporates the expansion and development of previous year's protocols.

BC Housing does not provide funding for daytime warming centres that are opened during EWR alerts. Recognizing that during extreme weather conditions there may still be individuals requiring somewhere to get warm or cool, the City of Victoria will activate warming or cooling centres when necessary to fill this gap. These sites are in addition to EWR shelters activated by BC Housing and the GVCEH. While they are not set up with beds or mats, they provide a warm or cool and safe space for people who need it most during the coldest and hottest months of the year. This BC Housing EWRP is in effect beginning on November 1 each year.

Background - Applicable Legislation, policies and plans

[Assistance to Shelter Act \(ASA\)](#)

Grants local police and RCMP the capacity to assist a person who is homeless to a shelter during extreme weather events. Once in the shelter the person may choose whether or not they want to stay. This assists law enforcement officers to assist those who are homeless and sleeping outside during extreme weather events.

[Emergency Program Act, Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation](#)

States that a local authority must reflect in the local emergency plan(s) the potential emergencies and disasters that could affect it, and its assessment of the relative risk of occurrence and the potential impact on people and property of the emergencies or disasters. A local authority must, identify the procedures by which emergency resources, including, without limitation, personnel, equipment, facilities and financial resources, may be obtained from sources within or outside of the jurisdictional area for which the local authority has responsibility, establish the procedures by which the plan is to be implemented, establish procedures by which those persons who may be harmed or who may suffer loss are notified of an emergency or impending disaster, coordinate the provision of food,

clothing, shelter, transportation and medical services to victims of emergencies and disasters, whether that provision is made from within or outside of the local authority, establish the priorities for restoring essential services provided by the local authority that are interrupted during an emergency or disaster, and recommend to service providers the priorities for restoring essential services not provided by the local authority that are interrupted during an emergency or disaster. A local authority may incorporate into its local emergency plan any confirmed, potential or anticipated assistance and resources of other levels of government or other non-government bodies.

[BC Public Health Act:](#)

30 (1) A health officer may issue an order under this Division only if the health officer reasonably believes that (a) a health hazard exists, (b) a condition, a thing or an activity presents a significant risk of causing a health hazard 31 (1) If the circumstances described in section 30 [when orders respecting health hazards and contraventions may be made] apply, a health officer may order a person to do anything that the health officer reasonably believes is necessary for any of the following purposes: (b) to prevent or stop a health hazard, or mitigate the harm or prevent further harm from a health hazard; 32 A health officer may order a person to do one or more of the following: b) in respect of a place, (i) leave the place (ii) not enter the place...etc. 39 (3) An order may be made in respect of a class of persons. This allows an order to be directed at defined groups of people, such as those with health issues that would be impacted by smoke. In the event that a medical health officer determines that public health is threatened by a health hazard, an infectious agent or a hazardous agent, (a) the medical health officer is responsible for directing the local response, in respect of public health, to the threat, and (b) for the purposes of paragraph (a), the health authority that employs the medical health officer must (i) provide the medical health officer with the staff and other resources that the medical health officer reasonably believes are necessary for the response.

[Extreme Weather Response Program Framework, 2011](#)

Developed for Cold weather event response but doesn't exclude heat response in its language. This document outlines the framework for BC Housing's Extreme Weather Response (EWR) Program which 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. The 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.

[BC Housing Extreme Weather Response Policy, 2008](#)

Developed for Cold weather event response but doesn't exclude heat response in its language.

[BC Health and Smoke Exposure \(HASE\) Coordination Committee Guideline \(BCCDC\)](#)

The Health and Smoke Exposure (HASE) Coordination Committee was created to coordinate planning and response efforts related to public health impacts for significant wildfire smoke events in BC. It outlines legislation, response coordination, risk assessment, activation processes, and recommended health interventions for wildfire smoke events.

Definitions

Extreme weather conditions

As per B. C's Assistance to Shelter Act (ASA) means:

- (a) in relation to a geographical area to which an Extreme Weather Response Plan applies,
 - (i) the weather conditions, but not other factors, set out in the description of extreme weather in the Extreme Weather Response Plan, or
 - (ii) any prescribed conditions that are not addressed or identified in the Extreme Weather Response Plan, or
- (b) in relation to a geographical area to which no Extreme Weather Response Plan applies, the prescribed conditions.

Extreme Weather Response Plan

As per B.C's Assistance to Shelter Act (ASA) means a current plan, filed with BC Housing, of a person who has entered into an agreement with BC Housing to participate in BC Housing's emergency shelter program, which plan includes, without limitation, the following:

- (a) a description of the geographical area to which the plan applies.
- (b) a description of weather conditions that are the basis for issuing an extreme weather alert.
- (c) a designation of a community representative.

Warming Centre

A warming center is a short-term emergency centre that operates when temperatures or a combination of precipitation, wind chill, wind and temperature become dangerously inclement. Their paramount purpose is the prevention of death and injury from exposure to the elements.

Cooling Centre

An air-conditioned public facility where people may go for relief during periods of extreme heat.

Emergency

Under BC's Emergency Program Act, emergency means a present or imminent event or circumstance that is caused by accident, fire, explosion, technical failure or the forces of nature, and requires prompt coordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the health, safety or welfare of a person or to limit damage to property.

Roles and Responsibilities

BC Housing

BC Housing is responsible for the management of the Extreme Weather Response Program, which funds community-based services to provide extra emergency shelter beds for people who are homeless during periods of weather that threaten the health and safety of homeless individuals and families in communities where there is not sufficient emergency shelter bed capacity. The program is designed to fund time-limited, temporary shelter beds and a community coordinator who is responsible for the EWRP and communications/notification of the EWRP activations. The EWR Program operates from November 1 to March 31 each year.

Local Authority

Responding to extreme weather events is a shared responsibility. Under the Emergency Program Act, [Local Authority Emergency Management Regulation](#), a **Local Authority** is responsible for:

- identifying hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities within their jurisdictional area and
- creating plans for these hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities
- notifying the public of impending hazards,
- identifying the procedures by which emergency resources, including, without limitation, personnel, equipment, facilities and financial resources, may be obtained from sources within or outside of the jurisdictional area for which the local authority has responsibility.

Although Extreme Weather Shelters which address the needs of the unhoused is BC Housing's responsibility, Local Authorities must create emergency plans which take into account the potential hazards and vulnerabilities within their jurisdictional area.

The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH)

The GVCEH has been contracted and funded by BC Housing to run the Extreme Weather Response Plan and is therefore responsible for updating the EWR Plan, designating a coordinator, and activating the EWR plan and all communications and notifications associated with the activation.

Police

Under the Assistance to Shelter Act Police are granted the authority to assist a person who is homeless to a shelter during extreme weather events. Once in the shelter the person may choose whether or not they want to stay.

Emergency Management BC

Emergency Management BC (EMBC) is currently developing an extreme heat & cold policy which will be shared with all Local Authorities once its complete. In the event of extreme weather events this winter EMBC advises that they:

- Will process EAFs for cold winter weather for incremental costs to local government around opening warming centers but not shelters.
- Are looking at supports to other Provincial agencies to assist them in sector response for vulnerable populations (not yet confirmed).
- Will host coordination calls when our ECCC colleagues make us aware of impending weather events.

Emergency Support Services (ESS) is a Provincial Program delivered by Local Authorities through Public Safety Lifeline volunteers (PSLVs). ESS is NOT eligible through EMBC's ESS program for response to assist the unhoused during extreme weather events. PSLVs are not covered for WorkSafe or Liability insurance if volunteering in a warming or cooling centre.

Salvation Army Community Response Unit (CRU)

The Salvation Army has a 32-foot freightliner truck that has the capacity to serve hot drinks and food – up to 1000 meals per hour. This truck may be requested to attend to warming centres to provide hot drinks, snack and meals to those attending the warming centre. The cost of drinks and possibly some snacks may be covered under an approved EAF by EMBC. CRU staff recommend that they are called out as soon as possible and can make the hot drinks and snacks and drop them off to the warming centre with to-go cups and containers and warming boxes to create efficiencies around logistics and following COVID protocols. Approx. cost for hot drinks, snacks and meals is \$5/person. EMBC indicated they would not cover full meals under an EAF as this is a social service that should be covered under another ministry.

Activation Criteria

Warming Centre activation criteria

Implementation of BC Housing's Extreme Weather Response Plan will be called by the Regional Coordinator (this year the GVCEH has been contracted for this role) when weather conditions are deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of homeless persons. Anticipated weather factors from Environment Canada forecasts (or other weather forecasting services) 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 Zero Degrees Celsius.

Temporary EWR shelters are only open for overnight stays and include 2 meals. Warming Centres will be activated under the same criteria listed above as EWR's but will not provide sleeping mats or meals.

Cooling centre activation criteria

Environment Canada data is used in BC to determine humidex and/or temperature triggers. Vancouver Coastal Health and Fraser Health Authorities use specific trigger algorithms to set municipal emergency plans in motion. For example, when the average of the **current** day's 14:00h temperature **and tomorrow's** forecasted high is $\geq 34^{\circ}\text{C}$ at Abbotsford Airport or $\geq 29^{\circ}\text{C}$ at Vancouver Airport, an extreme heat warning is issued and municipalities are advised to call a heat emergency. For jurisdictions outside of the lower mainland, BC CDC is currently establishing heat response triggers.

During the summer 2021 Heatwave events, EMBC utilized ECCC for the overall warning/alert mechanism for the reasoning to justify Cooling Centre support. The official EMBC policy currently under development and will likely include information on triggers and activation criteria.

Warming Centres

Warming Centres may be activated to address the gap when there is insufficient extreme weather shelter capacity. Warming Centres may be activated in churches, community centres or other civic facilities. Emergency management BC (EMBC) will fund, upon approved expenditure authorization

forms (EAF) incremental costs to local government associated with the activation of warming centers. The City will coordinate with EMBC, BC Housing, the GVCEH, Churches, Community Centres, and other community organizations involved in EWR in order to identify facilities and resources for activating warming centres.

BC Housing's EWR coordinator will provide communications support and notification of when and where warming centres are activated when the EWR Plan is activated. Warming centres will be activated under the same criteria as EWR shelters. This will allow greater coordination around communications and notifications, including through the BC211 system. When the BC Housing Coordinator activates the EWR Plan an email notification will be sent to all stakeholders, including the City of Victoria's emergency management division, VicPD, VFD, PRF and Engineering and PW.

Cooling Centres

Climate change is a key factor driving increases in summer temperatures. In British Columbia (BC), increases in summer temperatures are expected to rise faster than the global average. In 2009 an extreme heat event resulted in an estimated 110 premature deaths in the lower mainland. This past summer of 2021 we experienced a heat dome and two additional heat waves which posed public health risks. Some populations, such as the elderly, those living in social isolation, taking certain drugs, or living in impoverished circumstances, are more at risk of negative health impacts from heat. Research has shown that strategies such as water distribution, hot day visits to socially isolated people, moving care facility patients to air conditioned rooms, and monitoring workers in warm environments, have been effective in lowering the number of heat related deaths on extremely hot days.

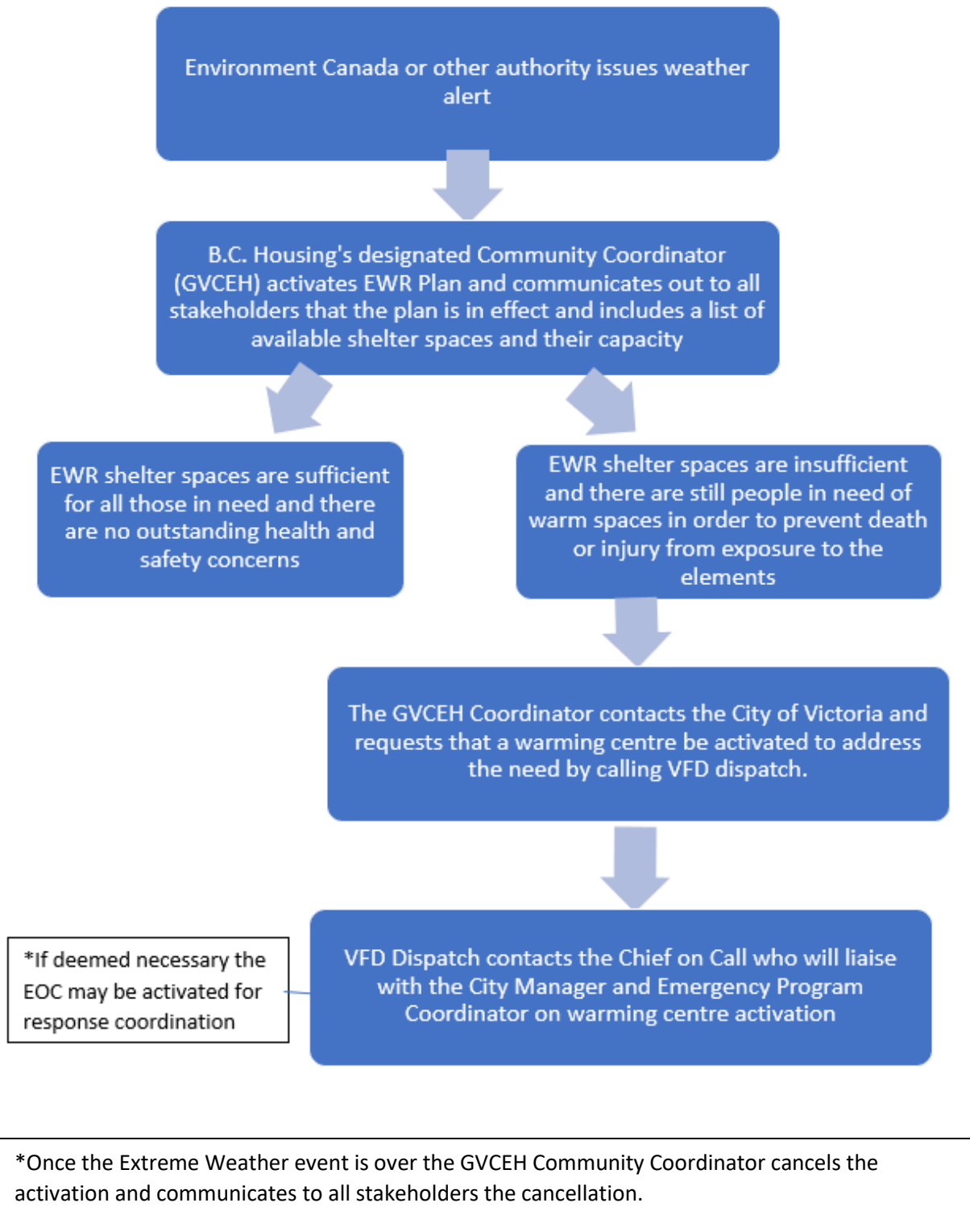
The City of Victoria will identify facilities that can be activated as cooling centres during extreme heat events.

Each winter and summer season Emergency Management and Facilities staff reach out to churches, community centres, and civic facilities in order to pre-identify warming and cooling centre facilities and resources, and collects the following information:

- Facility name and contact information
- Size of the space available
- Hours avail for operation of a warming or cooling centre
- Is the facility:
 - heated?
 - air conditioned?
 - Accessible via public transit?
 - Accessible for people with disabilities?

- Pet friendly?
- Does it have bathroom and / or shower facilities?
- Is there WiFi available?
- Are there available Kitchen facilities?
- Are shopping carts and belongings allowed?
- Would additional staffing be required for operation of a warming or cooling centre?
- Is there a facility rental fee?

Warming Centre Activation Flow Chart



Cooling Centre Activation Flow Chart

*This may change if and when BC Housing becomes responsible for heat as well as cold events. Waiting for EMBC and BC Housing policies on extreme heat events in order to complete this section of the plan...

