

The 2021/22

Greater Victoria

Extreme Weather Response Plan



greater victoria
coalition to end
homelessness

hope has found a home

Introduction

The Greater Victoria Extreme Weather Response Plan is a strategy for coordinating the region's overnight shelters in the event of extreme and/or dangerous weather conditions. This plan activates shelter spaces to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness. It documents the framework for extending resources to provide safe, warm spaces, and incorporates the developments of previous year's protocols.

The 2021/22 Greater Victoria Extreme Weather Response (EWR) Plan is developed by The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness with support from BC Housing.

****This plan may be updated as further coordination takes place. This year's response is impacted by a staffing shortage which has altered the ability for organizations to open and operate available spaces. ****

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Organization/Contact	Year Round Shelters	Temporary Shelters	EWR Shelters
Salvation Army - ARC 525 Johnson Street Ph. 250-384-3396	21 Beds Men 19+ only		30 Beds Co-Ed
Sooke Shelter Society 6750 West Coast Road. Ph. 250-858-5539			5 Beds Co-Ed 19+
Mount Tolmie – PHS Community Services Society 3690 Richmond Road Ph. 250-995-0131	35 Beds Co-Ed 19+		
Victoria Cool Aid Society - Rock Bay Landing 535 Ellice Street Ph. 250-383-1951	47 Beds Co-Ed 19+	20 Co-Ed 19+	
Victoria Cool Aid Society – Cool Aid Seasonal Shelter 755 Pandora Ave Ph. 250-388-7112 (Referrals same as Rock Bay Landing)		20 Beds Co-Ed 19+	
Victoria Cool Aid Society – Sandy Merriman Ph. 250-480-1408	20 Beds Women 19+ only		
Victoria Cool Aid Society 2317 Dowler Place Ph. 250-381-2159	12 Beds Co-Ed 19+		
Our Place Society 225 Russell Street Ph. 778-265-5977		45 Beds Co-Ed 19+	
Our Place Society 932 Balmoral Road. Ph 250-388-7112 Ext. 222		36 Beds Co-Ed 19+	
Our Place Society 1240 Yates Street Ph. 778-265-0809		48 Beds Co-Ed 19+	
PHS Community Services 2915 Douglas Street Ph. 250-360-0093, 250-385-5568		17 Beds Co-Ed 19+ 5 Float Spaces 16 Women’s Beds	
Out of the Rain Night Youth Shelter 1450 Elford Street Ph. 250-415-3856 c/o Beacon Community Services (www.outoftherainvictoria.ca) (+30 October 15th to April 15th Only)		25 Beds Co-Ed (Ages 15-25)	

TOTAL SPACES:	135	227-232	35 (Staff dependant)
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Extreme Weather Response Plan

EWR Triggers:

Implementation of the Extreme Weather Response Plan will be called by the EWR Coordinator when weather conditions are deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of people experiencing homelessness. Anticipated weather factors from Environment Canada forecasts (or other weather forecasting services) considered 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.**

The Regional Coordinator will decide (based on availability and the activation plan determined by the committee) when the Extreme Weather Response will be activated on a given night given the above-mentioned factors and the relative occupancy and capacity of existing shelters.

In the event of an activation of the EWR in the Greater Victoria area, the coordinator will make supports available to the outer lying municipalities on a case-by-case basis. All municipalities in the Greater Victoria area are encouraged to contact the coordinator if they are concerned about the welfare of an individual(s) in their municipality and are unable to secure local, existing community supports.

City of Victoria Warming Centres

The City of Victoria, with support from Emergency Management BC (EMBC), will be operating warming centres on an as-needed basis - when the EWR is activated. These warming centres will address the gap when there is insufficient EWR shelter capacity and/or during extreme

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weather that occurs during the daytime. These warming centres do not have sleeping mats or bunks, they are simply warm, indoor spaces.

The EWR Coordinator will provide communications support and notification of when and where warming centres are activated when the EWR is activated. Current sites for these warming centres are:

1. James Bay United Church, 511 Michigan Street
Capacity – 30

Pets allowed – yes (if well behaved)

Wheelchair accessible – yes

2. The Sanctuary Youth Drop-in Centre, 767 Humboldt St
Capacity – 15

Pets allowed – yes, preferably on leash, must be well behaved

Wheelchair accessible – No

Age restrictions – 14 to 20 years old

If more sites are needed, the following may be activated:

St. John the Divine, St. Andrews Cathedral and/or Centennial United Church.

Extreme Weather Response Notification Process

Once the decision has been made to activate the EWR, the EWR Coordinator is responsible for notifying the participants and partnering agencies using the following procedure:

1. The EWR Coordinator will contact participating EWR shelter site operators to confirm operational readiness and staffing to activate overnight spaces.
2. The EWR Coordinator will contact the City of Victoria's Emergency Program Coordinator to alert of Extreme Weather Response activation.
3. Based on operational capacity of EWR shelters and/or the following day's weather forecast, the City will determine if warming centres will be activated.
4. The EWR Coordinator will proceed with notification process.
5. With two emails, EWR Coordinator will notify and apprise of EWR activated shelter facilities the following groups:
 - Designated representatives of BC Housing, The City of Victoria, District of Saanich and Township of Esquimalt
 - The Victoria Police Department and the Saanich Police Department and EComm
 - Service providers, health agencies and other relevant organizations such as community centres

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6. EWR Coordinator will update the GVCEH website (victoriahomelessness.ca) to reflect the status of the EWR and shelter availability for the night (hours, locations and capacity), including The City of Victoria's warming centres (hours, locations and capacity)
7. The EWR Coordinator will make a post on Twitter (@HomeforHope) and Facebook (@HomeforHope) alerting of the EWA activation
8. The EWR Coordinator will create a poster for the activation (using a pre-created template) with details on EWR locations and/or City of Victoria warming centres. These will be emailed to service providers to use at their locations to ensure clients are notified of activation.

Activities During Extreme Weather Response Activation

Following an EWA activation, the EWA should be assumed to be in effect until it is cancelled. There is no need for daily reminders that the EWA is in effect. However reminders can be sent to community partners and to community via social media to help spread word of the available spaces.

- **City of Victoria:** Record warming site capacity data and provide updates to EMBC and cc: EWR Coordinator; Keep EWR Coordinator updated on staffing levels and site capacity
- **EWR Shelter Site Operators:**
Provide BC Housing with the following:
 - HIFIS Data (number of clients etc.)
 - A description of any critical incidents related to Extreme Weather Events and how they were responded to
 - Notification if BC Housing needs to follow up on any media inquiries
 - Keep EWR Coordinator in the loop on numbers and capacity, alert EWR Coordinator by text if shelter reaches capacity.
- **EWR Coordinator:** Stay informed of capacity and numbers, in consistent contact with EWR Shelter(s) and City of Victoria

Role of Police

As defined by the Assistance to Shelter Act [SBC 2009] Chapter 32:

1. **Assessment if person is at risk :** A police officer may assess whether a person is a person at risk.
- (2) In an assessment under subsection (1), a police officer must consider whether all of the following apply:

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- (a) the person is in the geographical area to which the extreme weather alert applies;
- (b) the person is, or reasonably appears to be, 19 years of age or older;
- (c) the person, in the opinion of the police officer, is suffering physical harm or is at risk of suffering physical harm because of the extreme weather conditions;
- (d) any other prescribed considerations.

2. Request to go to emergency shelter or accommodation:

(1) If a police officer has made an assessment under section 5 that a person is a person at risk, the police officer may request the person at risk to choose to

- (a) accompany the police officer to an emergency shelter, or
- (b) go unaccompanied to
 - (i) an emergency shelter, or
 - (ii) any other accommodation that would protect the person at risk from the extreme weather conditions.

(2) For purposes of subsection (1) (b) (ii), the accommodation must be accommodation

- (a) to which the person at risk can secure entry,
- (b) in which the person at risk is entitled or permitted to reside,
- (c) that is a structure, vehicle or vessel primarily designed to be used as living quarters and provides protection from physical harm or risk of physical harm due to extreme weather conditions, and
- (d) that meets any other prescribed conditions.

Agency Communication

Agencies should have the ability to communicate with each other to ensure that clients are being directed to the most appropriate facility. At no time should anyone be turned away during an EWR activation. Clients should instead be redirected to an appropriate facility or resource.

If EWR Shelter Reaches Capacity:

Salvation Army Staff:

1. Send email to overnight service providers and police, alerting that shelter is full
2. Text EWR Coordinator to alert of capacity. EWR Coordinator will contact City of Victoria to coordinate possible overnight warming centres for following evening (if they aren't already running)

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3. Call Emergency Program Manager Coordinator at City of Victoria to alert of capacity – if warming centres are running, request current availability
4. If necessary, coordinate with other open shelter sites to ensure individuals have a place to go.

Extreme Weather Response Deactivation

Once the decision has been made to deactivate the Extreme Weather Response, the Regional Coordinator is responsible for notifying and contacting the participants and partnering agencies using the following procedure.

1. Contact participating EWR shelter sites to confirm their deactivation and confirm any required resources for future activation
2. Send email notifying of deactivation and providing information on which year-round shelter facilities continue to operate:
 - All participating service agencies & request that they update client information to reflect which options are available that night
 - Designated representatives of BC Housing, The City of Victoria, District of Saanich and Township of Esquimalt
 - Duty Staff Sergeants of both the Victoria Police Department and the Saanich Police Department
 - Regional media outlets
 - Communications representatives of regional social services organizations
 - Drop-in centres, community centres, health centres and other agencies
3. Update the GVCEH website (victoriahomelessness.ca) to reflect the deactivation of the EWR
4. Make a post on Twitter (@HomeforHope) and Facebook (@HomeforHope) alerting that the EWR is cancelled
5. Remind service providers to remove posters alerting of EWR and locations.

Activation Website Update (Victoriahomelessness.ca)

An Extreme Weather Alert (EWA) is in effect for Greater Victoria

An Extreme Weather Alert (EWA) is in effect for Greater Victoria. This EWA activates the authorities in the Assistance to Shelter Act for police to assist persons at risk due to extreme weather conditions and remains in effect until it is cancelled. This EWA was issued on (DATE) at (TIME), due to the following weather conditions and forecast: *Description of weather and forecast.*

The following shelters will provide spaces during this EWA:
Salvation Army A.R.C. - 525 Johnson St. – 30 Mats (Co-Ed).
 Hours are from 8:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.
 This site does not allow pets or shopping carts.
 Soup is provided from 8:30 p.m.- 10 p.m.
 (or until it runs out).

The City of Victoria be operating warming centres at the following locations:

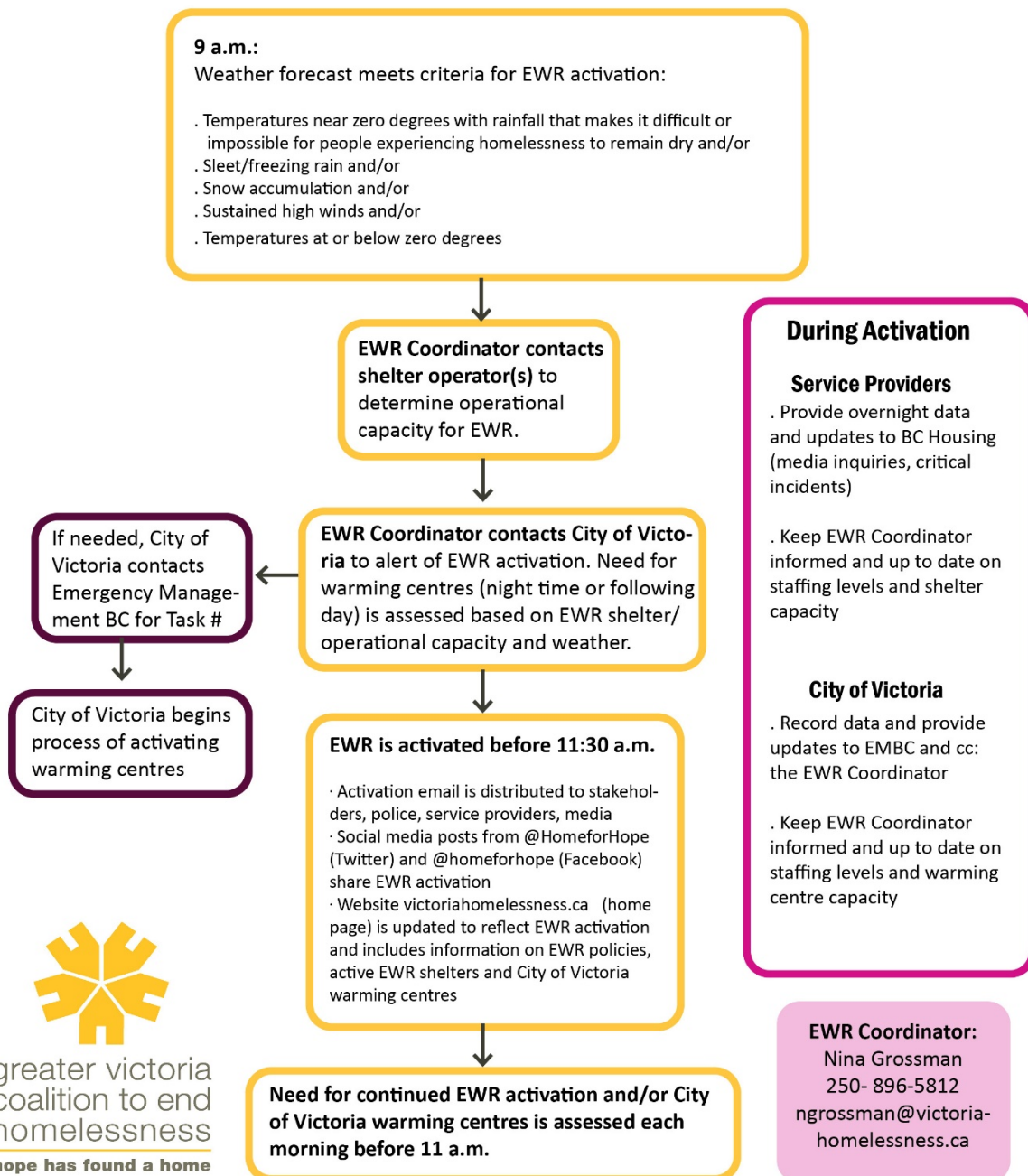
1. **James Bay United Church, 511 Michigan Street**
 Pets allowed – yes (if well behaved)
 Wheelchair accessible – yes
2. **The Sanctuary Drop in centre, 767 Humboldt St**
 Pets allowed – yes, preferably on leash, must be well behaved
 Wheelchair accessible – No
 Age restrictions – 20 and above for warming centre

All Updates will be posted on this webpage.
 For more information contact EWR Coordinator **Nina Grossman at 250-896-5812.**

Extreme Weather Alert Contact List for Email 1:

Police Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Police • Saanich Police • EComm
Provincial Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Housing

Extreme Weather Response Activation Flow of Information Chart



Media Inquiries

EWR participants and partners are encouraged to direct all media inquiries to the EWR Coordinator. In the event the media approaches an organization that is hosting an extreme weather shelter, the organization may direct them to the EWR Coordinator if they choose. Any media releases with regard to the EWR will be forwarded in draft form to designated representatives of BC Housing for comments and final approval before release.

Regular media requests about EWR (non-crisis related) can be answered by the EWR Coordinator and/or EWR shelter operators. Communication between these entities is encouraged.

Participation in Extreme Weather Response Plan

Agencies, groups or individuals wishing to participate in the Greater Victoria EWR Plan should contact the Regional Coordinator (Nina Grossman). There are many options for participation including volunteering, donating resources, or as a participating agency.

Funding for the provision of overnight shelter through this plan is provided under BC Housing's Extreme Weather Response Policy. Partnering and participating agencies providing overnight shelter services are expected to meet the specific eligibility, budgeting, statistical reporting, invoice and expense claim requirements as described in BC Housing's EWR Policy.

EWR Agency Responsibilities

- Inspection and approval by the municipal fire department responsible including overnight sleeping occupancy
- Appropriate zoning for residential or assembly use
- Adequate liability insurance coverage for building owner or operating agency
- Adequate washroom facilities
- Operating hours sufficient to allow a minimum of eight hours uninterrupted sleep per night with 12 hours of operation being preferred.
- Provide EWR nightly budget to BC Housing for approval
- In addition to a facility or premises meeting the above requirements, other resources required to operate an overnight shelter resource include: Appropriately trained and experienced staff. A minimum of a 1 to 30 staff to client ratio is preferred with a 2 staff minimum.
- A level one first aid kit and at least one staff on site with current emergency first aid certification.
- Fast access to an emergency phone, either cell or land based.

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- Up to date contact list with emergency and support numbers listed in addition to other shelter providers
- Staff communication log with statistical data and incident recording form
- Sharps container for bio-hazardous materials.
- Adequate sleeping materials such as cots, mats and blankets for capacity.
- Appropriate cleaning and protective materials for both general and specific cleaning duties
- Good supply of strong garbage bags to give out to clients with belongings