



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Community Safety Committee
From: Deborah Procter, Manager, Emergency Programs
Re: Richmond Extreme Weather Response Plan

to Community Safety Committee - Feb 13, 2007
Date: January 23, 2007
File: 08-40577-11-02

Staff Recommendation

That the revised Extreme Weather Response Plan be approved by Council.

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Deborah Procter
Manager, Emergency Programs

Att.

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ROUTED TO: CONCURRENCE
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
REVIEWED BY TAG YES NO
REVIEWED BY CAO YES NO

Staff Report

Origin

At the November 7th, 2006 meeting of the Planning Committee, the Chair raised the issue of updating Richmond’s cold weather response protocol. The Committee directed staff to update the protocol as soon as possible. This report presents the Extreme Weather Response Plan for Council approval.

Analysis

The Extreme Weather Response Plan was developed in 2003. In November of 2006, the Extreme Weather Planning Committee met to review and update the Plan. Led by the Extreme Weather Coordinator with the Greater Vancouver Cold/Wet Weather Strategy, members of the Richmond Extreme Weather Planning Committee include the Salvation Army Richmond House, Richmond Bethel Church, Richmond Youth Service Agency, Touchstone Family Association, and the City. (The Greater Vancouver Cold/Wet Weather Strategy, is a network of organizations including shelter provider agencies, community based organizations, local entrepreneurs, health authorities, and municipal, provincial and federal governments, responding together to meet shelter needs during the winter months. Funding for the Extreme Weather Coordinator’s role within the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy is through a grant from the Government of Canada’s National Homelessness Initiative, Supporting Community Partnership Initiative.)

Highlights of proposed changes made to the Extreme Weather Response Plan include:

- The City of Richmond Emergency Management Office will make the decision to activate the extreme weather response, based on the following criteria:
 - Any snow accumulation; OR
 - Temperatures at or below –4 degrees Celsius (-2 with a wind chill); OR
 - Conditions deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of homeless persons.

Previously, the shelter operators made the activation decision.

- The Salvation Army Church is no longer available as an extreme weather shelter; however, the Richmond Youth Service Agency has volunteered to provide these services. Total extreme weather shelter spaces available are:

○ Richmond House	16
○ Richmond Bethel Church	12
○ Richmond Youth Service Agency	10
Total extreme weather shelter spaces	38

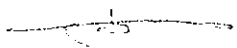
- There is now a process for the annual review and update of the Plan. At the end of March each year, the season's activations will be reviewed and issues resolved in preparation for the next year.
- The revised Plan has already been successfully activated twice. Activation and deactivation procedures were followed in accordance with the updated Plan, without any issues. In the first activation, Richmond House used one extreme weather bed on three of the five nights of activation. In the second activation, Richmond House used three to five of the extreme weather shelter spaces every night. The spaces at Richmond Bethel Church and Richmond Youth Service Agency were not required in either activation.

Financial Impact

It is anticipated that extreme weather would occur up to ten nights a year, with activation ranging from 1 – 4 times per year. City of Richmond Stores staff would deploy the cots and blankets from emergency supplies in City Stores to the Richmond Bethel Church and Richmond Youth Service Agency upon activation and deactivation. Staff time and possibly overtime (for a weekend or late afternoon deployment) may be incurred to deliver the cots and blankets, on an as needed basis. Start up costs for this program are estimated at \$1850 to cover the existing cots with waterproof covers. The two activations this winter have cost the City approximately \$200 in total due to overtime, although any one activation may cost the City up to \$200 for staff overtime and blanket cleaning. The City's Emergency Programs office will bear these costs.

Conclusion

This Plan is presented for Council approval and its effectiveness will be analyzed in 2007.



Deborah Procter
Manager, Emergency Programs
(1211)

DP:dp

Richmond Extreme Weather Response Plan

Introduction

The Richmond 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 Richmond Homelessness Steering Committee spearheaded the development of the initial Extreme Weather Response Plan. Assistance with the planning process has been provided by the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy through funding from the Federal Government's Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative. The Richmond Extreme Weather Planning Committee is comprised of community members that represent a broad array of organizations and agencies. They include:

Community Organizations:

- Salvation Army Richmond House
- Richmond Bethel Church
- Richmond Youth Service Agency
- Touchstone Family Association

City of Richmond:

- Policy Planning Department
- Emergency Management Office

The Current Homelessness Situation

The GVRD 24 Hour Homelessness Snapshot completed March 15, 2006 estimated that there are 33 homeless people in Richmond. This number is generally accepted as a conservative estimate, as it does not include those who choose to sleep outdoors and those who slip through the cracks in the social services system. However, the number does provide a starting point for planning as an adequate response for the homeless when an extreme weather alert is called. It is anticipated that any data collected through the Extreme Weather Response Program will build the knowledge of homelessness in Richmond.

Regular Winter Shelter Capacity

There are normally a total of 10 shelter beds in Richmond during the winter months from November 1 to March 31. Shelter capacity for men is expanded at Richmond House from 7 to 10 beds on an ongoing basis during this time. BC Housing provides funding for this 3-bed expansion through the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy. In addition, Nova House, a 10-bed transition house, provides shelter for women and their children fleeing abuse.

The Broader Homeless Population

There are those in the homeless population who do not seek admission into shelters. It is common knowledge that there are some areas in the City where the homeless will congregate

outdoors. These areas are outlined in this Plan. In addition, the Airport Chaplaincy reports that there are a significant number of homeless people, primarily women who often have children or are pregnant, who end up at the airport. They arrive from flights into the City or they come to the airport from the surrounding communities for a warm dry place to stay where they can go unnoticed for a few days. While there is no clear estimation of the size of this broader homeless population, the Extreme Weather Response Plan takes their needs into account as well.

The Extreme Weather Response Plan

The Extreme Weather Response Plan meets the needs of a wide range of homeless people (e.g. men, women, youth over 18, seniors, and families) in the community and is flexible enough to address a varying number of people (as few as five to as many as twenty-five or more). To meet these criteria, the Richmond alert involves a range of options and levels of response.

Extreme Weather Alert

Extreme weather is defined as:

- Any snow accumulation; OR
- Temperatures at or below -4 degrees Celsius (-2 with a wind chill); OR
- Conditions deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of homeless persons.

Activation

The Richmond Emergency Management Office will decide whether to call an extreme weather alert by noon of the first day of an extreme weather event, if possible. This allows adequate time to mobilize for the activation while minimizing the potential for staff overtime costs. This determination will be based on the definition of extreme weather as outlined above, Environment Canada weather reports, weather alert notifications, and the perceived need for additional shelter space in the community.

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.

Activation/Deactivation Notification

ORGANIZATIONS	PHONE	EMAIL	COMMENTS
Richmond House	604-276-2490	rhshelter@shaw.ca	Call to advise activation and deactivation
Richmond Bethel Church	604-274-2811	office@richmondbethel.ca	Call to advise activation and deactivation
Richmond Youth Service Agency	604-271-7600		Call to advise activation and deactivation
City of Richmond Stores	604-244-1213		Call to request 12 cots and blankets delivered to Richmond Bethel Church, 10 cots and blankets delivered to Richmond Youth Service Agency
Manager Community Bylaws	604-247-4601	Wmercere@richmond.ca	E-mail to advise activation and deactivation
Supervisor-Property Use Inspection	604-247-4642	Jshebib@richmond.ca	E-mail to advise activation and deactivation
Social Planner	604-276-4220	lsherlock@richmond.ca	E-mail to advise activation and deactivation
Richmond Hospital Emergency Room Social Workers After Hours	604-278-9711 604-660-4927		Call to advise activation and deactivation
BC Ambulance Services			Fax activation/deactivation to: 604-872-6742
RCMP	604-278-1212		Call and fax Watch Commander (604-278-6773) to advise activation and deactivation
Chimo Crisis Services	604-279-7070	chimo@chimocrisis.com	E-mail to advise activation and deactivation
Emergency Mental Health Services	604-273-9121		Call to advise activation and deactivation
Touchstone Family Association	604-279-5599	touchstone@touchfam.ca	E-mail to advise activation and deactivation
Vancouver Airport Chaplaincy	604-303-3010	daggett@canada.com	Email to advise activation and deactivation
YVR Airport Operations	604-207-7022		Fax activation/deactivation to: 604-276-6099
BC Housing	604-694-2600	dmemann@bchousing.org	E-mail to advise activation and deactivation

The Response

Additional Temporary Emergency Shelter

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

- The Salvation Army's Richmond House Men's Shelter, 3111 Shell Road, will be expanded by 6 spaces to a maximum of 16 spaces for men.¹
- Richmond Bethel Church, 10200 No. 5 Road, will provide an additional 12 shelter spaces to families and women.²
- Richmond Youth Service Agency, 4-11220 Voyageur Way, will provide an additional 10 shelter spaces.²

Activation plans for each of the three sites have been developed. Each facility director will continue to manage their site, but may call upon other agencies for assistance.

Outreach

In addition to the temporary emergency shelters, outreach services will be conducted by Richmond Bethel Church for the homeless sleeping outside. Volunteer outreach workers will:

- Alert the homeless to the dangers of hypothermia presented by the weather conditions,
- Encourage them to seek shelter, and
- Provide transportation to the appropriate service. Those choosing to remain outdoors will receive appropriate clothing, blankets, hot food and beverages.

The following locations have been identified as potential outreach target areas:

- At Steveston Highway and Shell Road, south of Ironwood, in the adjacent wooded area
- Behind Park Road and Cooney Road, in the parkade
- Behind the former Legends Pub, across from Lansdowne Shopping Centre at Cooney and Lansdowne Road
- In Minoru Park
- In the Cultural Centre parkade (the Aquatic Centre is used as a place to keep warm)
- The Boy Scout Camp at Woodward's Landing

The Airport Chaplaincy will continue to monitor the airport for homeless people during the Extreme Weather Alert.

¹ The City of Richmond has indicated that, as long as the expansion of services at Richmond House is temporary and for emergency purposes, under the Extreme Weather Response Plan, regular City Bylaws pertaining to the number of people allowed to stay overnight in the house will be exempted.

² The City of Richmond has indicated that, as long as the shelter space is temporary and for emergency purposes, the Richmond Bethel Church and Richmond Youth Service Agency can be used for this purpose.

Timeframe

The extreme weather response can be implemented:

- Between November 1 and March 31
- Intermittently (5 – 10 nights per year) during the five-month period, as weather conditions and need dictate

Hours of Operation

Nighttime shelters are available generally between 9:00 pm and 7:00 am. BC Housing encourages Extreme Weather Shelters to be open long enough for clients to obtain at least 8 hours of sleep per night.

Evaluation and Plan Revision

After March 31st of each year, the Richmond Extreme Weather Planning Committee will reconvene under the direction of the Extreme Weather Regional Coordinator with the Greater Vancouver Cold/Wet Weather Strategy to review and amend the plan as required. As part of the evaluation procedure, data collected by the organizations involved in the response will be collated and distributed by BC Housing.

Prepared by:
Emergency Programs
City of Richmond