

Extreme Cold Emergency Response Plan

Revised October 18th 2024

DRAFT

Table of Contents

Purpose	3
Scope	3
Cowichan Extreme Cold Criteria	3
Cowichan Emergency Warming Centre	3
Site Details	4
Activation/Deactivation	4
Support to Other Agencies	4
Public Communications	5
Contact Information	5
Helpful Links	6
Site	6
Site Layout	7

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Purpose

This Plan will guide Cowichan community partners and local authorities in responding to extreme cold weather.

Scope

The scope of this project is to extend overnight warming options for the vulnerable population in the core area of Duncan and North Cowichan and to support local partner agencies in the region.

Cowichan Extreme Cold Criteria

The Cowichan Extreme Cold Criteria is determined by EMC in partnership with local NGOs serving the vulnerable and unhoused. The Criteria below is in place for the winter of 2024/25, and was validated by the community in September 2024:

- 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 of an amount that will not melt within 24 hours, even with higher temperatures; and/or
- Sustained high winds that warrant an Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) Special Weather Statement or Weather Warning for Duncan; and/or
- Temperatures at or below 0 Celsius; and/or
- Forecast of three or more days of consecutive winter rain

Cowichan Emergency Warming Centre (EWC) 2024/25

Given the absence of a viable BC Housing-sponsored Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelter in Cowichan for the winter of 2024/25, Emergency Management Cowichan (EMC), as the regional emergency management organization representing the CVRD and Member Municipalities, will respond to extreme cold emergency by opening an Emergency Warming Centre (EWC).

The EWC will be located at 140 Trans-Canada hwy in the parking lot behind the old Ramada Inn. When the criteria are met, the EWC will operate from 1900 hrs-0700 hrs. The CVRD has contracted an inside operator and a security provider, both with specialist knowledge and local experience serving the needs of the vulnerable unhoused in Cowichan.

Inside Operator: Lookout Housing and Health Society

Security Provider: Spectre Security

Site Details

The EWC for 2024/25 consists of a temporary modular structure, a separate bathroom trailer with running water, a security office, and two storage containers. The baseline capacity is 20 persons with the option to surge up to 40 as warranted by weather conditions. The site maintains a 1/10 ratio of Lookout staff/patrons. The number of people using this service is based on temperature, need, and operator availability.

The EWC will be available from November 15th to the end of March. Along with 24/7 security there will be an additional outreach worker 5 days/week to reduce any conflict caused by neighbourhood use pattern changes.

Activation/deactivation:

The Lookout Housing and Health Society is responsible for activation of the EWC. For activation, they will use their established network of community support organizations and first responders to pass along information. Activation notification will be sent out by email at 10:00 a.m. if the EWC is to open that night, based on the ECCC and Weather Network weather forecasts.

Lookout will deactivate the EWC when the weather improves beyond the Cowichan Extreme Cold Criteria threshold. Deactivation will follow the same messaging stream as the activation. It will be to the same established network. The centre will remain open until the deactivation email is sent out.

Support to Other Agencies

Extreme cold community response – When local extreme cold criteria is met, EMC on behalf of Cowichan local authorities, may activate additional resources to communicate risk, or to extend services to the general population beyond EWR.

In some cases, EMC can coordinate support for community agencies performing warming activities in their area. In order for community agencies to receive this support, the Cowichan Extreme Cold Criteria must be met as described above.

Agencies wishing to access EMC support for warming activities in their community are advised to contact EMC and discuss their plans and eligibility for cost support.

During business hours send an email to Emergency Management Cowichan General email account: General@emcowichan.ca

After Hours call the EMC Duty Manager phone: 778-403-4040

Costs that may be reimbursed:

- Rental of a non-local authority or First Nation facility for the provision of an emergency warming centre.
- Incremental janitorial and utilities costs.
- Incremental security costs
- Cost of heating device rentals.
- Incremental utility expenses.
- Beverages distributed during health and wellness checks where warm beverages are not readily available
- Warmed liquids made available at community warming centre facilities.
- Blankets made available at community warming centre facilities.
- Blankets distributed during health and wellness checks where warm water is not readily available.
- Warm clothing made available at community warming centre facilities
- Warm clothing distributed during health and wellness checks where warm water is not readily available.

Public Communications

EMC, working with the CVRD Communications team, is able to amplify any messaging from partner agencies related to extreme cold. Partner agencies should contact the EMC Duty Manager for assistance.

As the local authority entity responsible for emergency management, EMC provides public information in advance, during, and after an emergency event. Based on the BC Severe Winter Weather and Storm Preparedness Guide, EMC offers multi-platform advice and guidance to residents to help prepare for extreme cold events.

For more information please contact:

Josh McStravick - Emergency Management Technician: **250-710-1682** or after hours: **778-403-4040**

or

Ryan Wainwright - Sr. Manager – EMC Manager: **250-709-5815** or after hours: **778-403-4040**

Links to EMC websites

Alertable: <https://alertable.ca/signup/?site=Cowichan>,

EMC: <https://emcowichan.ca>,

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EMCowichan>,

X: https://x.com/i/flow/login?redirect_after_login=%2FEMCowichan

Site Map:



