

Cold Weather Strategy



2020/2021



Saskatoon
Housing
Initiatives
Partnership

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Background

In December 2012, United Way of Saskatoon and Area convened service providers to Saskatoon's homeless population - including shelters, health and emergency service agencies, police and housing providers - to develop a cold weather strategy for the community.

Since then, the strategy has been reviewed and updated annually; most recently on October 7, 2020.

This strategy is designed to work with existing services and to ensure situational awareness and promote coordinated effort so everyone sleeps in a safe place on a cold night in Saskatoon.

Saskatoon has been faced with many difficult challenges in 2020 such as COVID-19. COVID-19 has left supporting agencies no choice but to alter their services and hours of operations, which has raised obstacles for the Saskatoon's Cold Weather Response. More collaboration is encouraged in order to ensure our vulnerable population is cared for during these challenging times.

Principles

While individual service providers make their own policies, they also collectively agreed to be flexible with their policies during extreme cold weather to ensure people are safe. *2020 brings an added complexity with the COVID-19 Pandemic. Agencies that provide warm-up locations, or additional indoor services will need to collaborate this year to maintain physical distancing regulations while providing methods of reprieve from the cold. Partners and stakeholders will have to communicate on available services to clients in need and provide clear direction on how to access support in the cold.*

This strategy is guided by the following principles:

- No one should sleep outside on a cold night;
- Individual dignity must be respected even in emergency situations: each person should have a space to safely social distance and be should be provided appropriate PPE if required.
- Shelters will do their best to ensure everyone is allowed access to emergency shelter including intoxicated persons or those previously placed on a Service Review List; If an individual is not admitted, shelters are responsible for making a referral;
- Health and safety of staff and other residents is a priority and admission to a shelter must take into account both the health and safety of staff and residents;
- Everyone will work to ensure that individuals and families experiencing or at-risk of homeless are aware of safe, available sleeping options.

Cold Weather Alert

A new protocol was implemented in 2013 to provide a cold weather alert to police/emergency workers and front-line agencies. The purpose of the Cold Weather Alert is to provide all participants with a Continuity of Operations Plan within the existing Strategy. This plan provides the structure needed for multiple organizations to coordinate their response to unusual circumstances that would reduce the capacity, or effectiveness, of one or more organizations in the provision of emergency shelter during extreme weather conditions.

Note: When a Cold Weather Alert is issued, it remains active until there is a notification email/text that it has ended. Anyone on the Cold Weather Strategy team can initiate or cancel a Cold Weather alert once a trigger has been met or discontinued

When a cold weather alert is in place, any front-line service provider who comes into contact with a homeless person will be encouraged to take the extra step of ensuring that person has safe lodging arranged for the night.

A Step-by-Step outline of the Cold Weather Alert process can be found in Appendix A.

Target Groups

A screening mechanism is currently in place to ensure that people are directed to the appropriate services. Strategies for helping some of the most vulnerable target populations are outlined in **Appendix C – List of Target Groups**.

Transportation

Homeless individuals and families who need cold weather services may be too far away to walk so free transportation should be provided so long as individuals can safely social distance. **A list of transportation providers is in Appendix D.**

Warm-Up Locations

Homeless individuals and families can warm up at various locations listed in **Appendix E**.

Communication

Posters produced by Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership with information about free services available in Saskatoon will continue to be provided. It is important that individuals and families experiencing homelessness are informed of the options available. A communications strategy will be developed to increase awareness of the issue and the response.

The Emergency Management Organization utilizes notify now to send out Cold Weather alerts to contacts identified by SHIP as Cold Weather Strategy team members via text and email.

Strategy Evaluation and Feedback

The Cold Weather Strategy Committee will host virtual meetings on a monthly basis. The Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) will convene the meetings to review the implementation of the strategy and whether it has met the needs of Saskatoon’s homeless population.

Members of the Cold Weather Strategy Committee

- City of Saskatoon – Emergency Management Organization (EMO)
- Community Support Officers (CSO)
- CUMFI
- EGADZ
- Ministry of Social Services
- Salvation Army
- Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service
- Saskatchewan Health Authority
- Out Saskatoon
- Friendship Inn
- Prairie Harm Reduction
- Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership
- Saskatoon Indian Métis Friendship Centre
- Saskatoon Police Service
- SWITCH
- The Bridge on 20th Street
- Westside Community Clinic
- YWCA

Become a Member of the Cold Weather Strategy Advisory Team

The EMO provides members of the Cold Weather Strategy Advisory Team with information regarding alerts and status updates. This list is confirmed and/or updated at each team meeting. If your group wants to be added to the alert system, please email Lyn Brown at lbrown@shipyxe.ca with updated contact information and preferred method of contact (alerts are sent out via text and email). Members of the Cold Weather Strategy Advisory Team will receive an invite to a regularly scheduled conference call during the months of October up to and including April.

Appendix A – Cold Weather Alert – Step by Step

When a trigger is met anyone on the Cold Weather Strategy team can initiate an alert by calling EMO at 306-975-3030.

A Cold Weather Alert will go out to the CWA Team using the criteria listed in Appendix B.

Monday to Friday	The Saskatoon Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) will issue a Cold Weather Alert to the CWA Team using the criteria listed in Appendix B.
Weekends and Holidays	The Community Support Officers (CSO) will trigger a Cold Weather Alert (through Fire Dispatch) to the CWA Team using the criteria listed in Appendix B.
<i>Note: Once a Cold Weather Alert is issued, it remains active until there is a notification email/text that it has ended.</i>	

➤ A Cold Weather Alert Message will be sent:

○ **TEXT/EMAIL TITLE:** Cold Weather Alert

○ **TEXT/EMAIL SUBJECT:** Cold weather conditions. Follow instructions in the 2020/21 Cold Weather Strategy. Check Email instructions

○ **EMAIL SUBJECT:** Cold weather conditions exist. **Follow instructions in the 2020/21 Cold Weather Strategy.** If needed, check email for attachments. (The email will include the Assessment Form and the 2020/21 Cold Weather Strategy with instructions on dialing into the coordination call.)

➤ **When you receive a cold weather alert, submit the attached assessment form to:**

EMO.EOC@saskatoon.ca , **ONLY IF YOUR AGENCY IS HAVING AN ISSUE OR IS REQUESTING A CONFERENCE CALL. Fill out 401 or respond by email that your response is in place.**

➤ **Note: The following conference call procedure is only applicable during weekdays**

- If there are no issues or requests for a call, a conference call will NOT take place;
- Any agency can request EMO to initiate a conference call. If a call is required, agencies will be notified of a 4pm (1600h) conference call;
- Conference call will include COVID-19 updates or special events in the city that may impact shelter availability;
- EMO will facilitate the conference call. Agencies will be asked to share numbers of available space, report on observations of known homeless individuals, groups or encampments and share other relevant information.

Important

- Members of the Cold Weather Strategy team will alert front-line workers that a Cold Weather Alert is in place;
- If front line service workers come into contact with a homeless individual or family in the course of their duties, they will enquire about their plans for shelter that night.

For any other **circumstances** that require an alert (i.e. closure due to power outage, flood, etc.), contact the Saskatoon Emergency Management Organization (EMO) 306-975-3030. Contact SHIP as manager of the Cold Weather Strategy. (lbrown@shipye.ca). Th. Other emergency services will be included as necessary.

Appendix B – Cold Weather Alert Triggers

Once a trigger is met any member of the Cold Weather Strategy team can request an alert and the Saskatoon Emergency Management Organization (EMO) will send a Cold Weather Alert to the CWA Team. Criteria to trigger an alert are as follows;

Trigger Type	Threshold Criteria
Very Cold Temperatures within a 24-hour Period	When the air temperature or wind chill is expected to reach minus 30°C within a 24-hour period according to the Environment Canada Website Hourly Forecast Page (https://weather.gc.ca/forecast/hourly/sk40_metric_e.html)
Extreme Cold Warning from Environment Canada	When the air temperature or wind chill is expected to reach minus 40°C for at least two hours. (Note: it is highly likely that a Cold Weather Alert will already be in place due to the Very Cold Temperature within a 24-hour Period trigger listed above.)
Snowfall Warning from Environment Canada	When 10 cm of snow falls within 12 hours or less.
Winter Storm Warning from Environment Canada	When severe and potentially dangerous winter weather conditions are expected, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A major snowfall (25 cm or more within a 24-hour period); A significant snowfall (snowfall warning criteria amounts) combined with other cold weather precipitation types such as: freezing rain, strong winds, blowing snow and/or extreme cold; • Blizzard conditions may be part of an intense winter storm, in which case a blizzard warning is issued instead of a winter storm warning.
Weather Warning from Environment Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A generic weather warning may be issued for extreme weather events for which there is no suitable warning type, because they rarely occur. • A generic weather warning may also be issued for other weather events during situations where the environment is vulnerable due to pre-existing conditions and any further weather could result in a significant hazard. For example: 50 km/h winds following an ice storm which could cause structural wind damage. • A generic weather warning may also be issued for situations where the event is not expected to reach warning criteria values, but there is a special reason for the warning. For example: the first event of the season, or an off-season event.

For any other circumstances that require an alert and are not listed in the table above, any Cold Weather Strategy Advisory Team agency can contact Fire Dispatch directly at (306) 975-3030 to request a Cold Weather Alert be issued.

Appendix C – List of Target Groups

In general, if individuals or families need assistance, contact:

Monday to Friday (8:00am – 5:00pm)	After MSS business hours, weekends & holidays
Ministry of Social Services (MSS) (306) 933-5960	Salvation Army (306) 244-6280

The following screening mechanism is currently in place:

SCREEN FOR BRIEF DETOX	SCREEN FOR EMS (CALL 9-1-1)	SCREEN FOR POLICE
Client presentation... ➤ Agreeing to service ➤ Intoxicated ➤ Coherent ➤ Able to communicate ➤ Able to ambulate o Can transport themselves unassisted ➤ History of seizures or history of medical risk	Client presentation... ➤ ABCD's (Airway, Breathing, Circulation, Deadly Bleed) ➤ Unconscious/unresponsive ➤ Significant trauma or illness ➤ Semi-conscious, i.e. dazed & confused, unable to stand or complete simple tasks, lack of coherency, etc. ➤ No or labored breathing ➤ Suspected drug overdose ➤ Extreme agitation/confusion ➤ Experiencing hallucinations ➤ Experiencing seizures ➤ Vomiting or evidence of vomitus	Client presentation... ➤ Hostile ➤ Violent ➤ Requires Detainment – i.e. wanted person, court conditions, etc.

Additional Accommodation for People Who Are Intoxicated

When a Cold Weather Alert is issued, the Salvation Army (corner of 19th Street and Avenue C) will allow intoxicated persons to stay at the shelter providing they are not violent.

People Who Are on A “Service Review List” From Shelters

- Shelters will do their best to ensure everyone is allowed access to emergency shelter including intoxicated persons or those previously placed on an “unable to serve” list; If an individual is not admitted, shelters are responsible for making a referral;
- Health and safety of staff and other residents is a priority and admission to a shelter must take into account both the health and safety of staff and residents;

People Who Choose not to Access Services

An estimated 15-30 people choose to stay away from all government systems and assistance, staying outside. This group is particularly vulnerable and of concern.

This group of people are well known to each other. They self-monitor the whereabouts of other group members, alerting agencies like CUMFI or The Bridge when someone goes missing. In cold weather, some of these individuals find indoor accommodations with friends and family (both in Saskatoon and in home communities), and some may use the shelter system. A more formal monitoring system was considered but deemed unworkable.

The Ministry of Social Services is working with The Salvation Army to identify feasible ways and support required to work with these individuals to build trust and, eventually, help them accept services. The principle behind this work is to help get people off the streets (come in for meals, come in for showers and warm breaks) rather than helping them stay on the streets (by giving warm blankets, tents, socks, etc.)

Families and Couples

Families need to be able to stay together. Shelter spaces are not typically set up for families with a father and mother, or for families led by a single father. In these situations, Social Services will allow these families to stay in hotels.

Couples pose a greater challenge. Men and women may be able to stay under the same roof but there is currently no capacity to allow them to sleep in the same room or bed.

Appendix D – List of Transportation Providers

Some individuals experiencing homelessness need cold weather services that may be too far away to walk, so free transportation is necessary so long as individuals can safely social distance.

The following organizations should be contacted if an individual requires transportation:

Ministry of Social Services (MSS): (306) 933-5960

- Monday-Friday, 8:00am – 5:00pm
- After MSS business hours, weekends and holidays

EGADZ Outreach Van: (306) 221-3719

- 2pm-10pm 7 Days a week

Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service: (306) 933-6200

- Available 24 hours a day and can help an individual experiencing homeless access transportation, shelter, food and other needs.

Saskatoon Transit: Safe Bus:

- Developed in partnership with Child & Youth Friendly Saskatoon in June, 2000, Safe Bus was designed to assist anyone, of any age, that needs immediate shelter or needs to contact emergency services. By simply and safely flagging down a bus or going to a parked bus, transit operators are required to immediately contact emergency services directly through the on-bus radio system and give the person in peril a safe place to wait.

You do not need to pay to use Safe Bus.

Flagging down a bus safely is as easy as standing at a stop or on a sidewalk and waving your hand in the air. The driver will recognize you as a person in need and stop for you. We remind parents to tell their child to never step onto the roadway to flag down a bus.

LIST OF WARM-UP LOCATIONS

As Part of Saskatoon's Cold Weather Strategy

SALVATION ARMY (FOYER)

339 Avenue C South (306) 244-6280

HOURS: EVERYDAY, 24 HOURS

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: HAND SANITIZING, MASKS

*LIMITED CAPACITY

EGADZ (YOUTH ONLY)

4851 1st Avenue North (306) 931-6699

*STREET OUTREACH (7 DAYS A WEEK)

2pm-10pm (306) 221-3719

HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY 3:30PM - 9PM

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: PHYSICAL DISTANCING

*LIMITED CAPACITY

PRAIRIE HARM REDUCTION

1516 20th Street West (306) 242-5005

HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY 10:30AM - 4PM

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: MASKS, SOCIAL DISTANCING

*LIMITED CAPACITY

FRIENDSHIP INN

*MEAL SERVICE ONLY

619 20th Street West (306) 242-5122

HOURS: 8AM - 2PM

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: MASKS PHYSICAL DISTANCING

HAND SANITIZING

*LIMITED CAPACITY

THE BRIDGE FELLOWSHIP CENTRE

1008 20th Street West (306) 382-2855

HOURS: MONDAY 8:30AM - 2PM TUESDAY - THURSDAY 8:15AM - 2PM

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: MASKS, SANITIZING, SOCIAL DISTANCING

TEMPERATURE CHECKS

*LIMITED CAPACITY

OUTSaskatoon

213 Avenue C South (306) 665-1224

HOURS: MONDAY - WEDNESDAY 9AM - 5PM

THURSDAY - FRIDAY 9AM - 9PM

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: MASKS, SANITIZING, SCREENING,

SOCIAL DISTANCING

*LIMITED CAPACITY

STATION 20 WEST

1120 20th Street West (306) 343-9378

HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY 9AM - 4PM

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: MASKS, SANITIZING

*LIMITED CAPACITY

SASKATOON PUBLIC LIBRARY

100 219 Avenue K South (306) 975-7508

HOURS: MONDAY - SATURDAY 10AM - 6PM

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: MASKS, SANITIZING, SOCIAL DISTANCING 1HR MAX

*LIMITED CAPACITY

CUMFI

*MEAL SERVICE ONLY

315 Avenue M South (306) 975-9999

HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY 8:30AM - 5PM

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: MASKS, SANITIZING, SOCIAL DISTANCING

*LIMITED CAPACITY



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***EFFECTIVE AS OF:
NOVEMBER 6, 2020**