

Procedure

Supporting Vulnerable People During Extreme Weather Conditions

This procedure falls under Council Policy C620A Supporting Vulnerable People During Extreme Weather Conditions.

Program Impacted	Community Development and Social Support <i>Edmonton is a connected community and people have what they need to succeed.</i>
Approved By	City Manager
Date of Approval	July 30, 2026
Approval History	N/A
Next Scheduled Review	July 30, 2030

Application

The City of Edmonton is committed to reducing the health impacts of extreme weather conditions on vulnerable people. Public health research demonstrates that vulnerable people, particularly those experiencing homelessness, face a greater risk of negative health effects, during periods of poor air quality or during sustained cold or heat. The City of Edmonton funds seasonal support to supplement the broader social service sector response in safeguarding vulnerable people against environmental exposures. The seasonal supports are activated and deactivated on the following dates:

- Winter Seasonal Response (Extreme Cold): November 1 to March 31 annually
- Summer Seasonal Response (Extreme Heat and Poor Air Quality): May 15 to September 30 annually

Additional communications channels and/or supports may be implemented when any of the following conditions are forecasted:

- The temperature is expected to reach -20°C with wind chill for three consecutive days
- The temperature is expected to reach 29°C for three consecutive days
- The air quality health index score is expected to reach seven for two consecutive days

The supplemental supports and/or communication channels are discontinued when the above conditions are no longer met.

Requirements: City of Edmonton-led responses

- Extreme Weather
 - Respite at open city facilities (libraries, recreation centers and City Hall) during extreme cold, extreme heat or poor air quality.
 - Resource cards, which provide information on critical services like shelter and health services, are updated biannually for winter and summer responses and distributed to frontline City staff and social service agencies.
 - Extreme weather activation, deactivation and extension notices are sent out via the City's extreme weather online mailing list to email list subscribers and through a Public Service Announcement (PSA).
 - Non-digital extreme weather information is strategically placed around the city to expand reach to include those without internet access.
 - Extreme weather preparedness and health information is provided on the City of Edmonton extreme weather webpage and social media channels such as 'X', 'Facebook' and 'Instagram'.
- Winter Response
 - Annual winter supports are activated on November 1 and run until March 31 the following year, including:
 - Winter Shelter Shuttle Service: Shuttles run on predetermined routes to offer transportation from transit stations to emergency shelters and other service providers, such as health care services. Support workers are on board at all times to connect riders with necessary services.
 - When thresholds are reached (-20°C with wind chill for three consecutive days) additional transportation services and temporary overnight shelter spaces are activated.
 - Temporary overnight shelter spaces are provided in partnership with Al Rashid mosque, conditional on volunteer support and capacity of Al Rashid.
- Summer Response
 - Annual summer responses are activated from May 15 to September 30, including:
 - Temporary water stations that are set up across the city to allow for access to potable water. Installation of water stations is subject to temperatures consistently being above 0 °C.
 - Information regarding the dangers and warning signs of heat-related or poor-air quality related illness, precautions, and the availability of open city facilities and spray parks for respite is shared through multiple channels.
 - Bottled water and N95 masks are available for pick-up at open City facilities.

Roles and responsibilities

- The City of Edmonton Affordable Housing and Homelessness Extreme Weather Coordinator monitors temperature and air quality and determines when extreme weather supplemental supports can be activated.
- The Affordable Housing and Homelessness team works with the Communications team to coordinate public announcements and notifications of extreme weather activation, deactivation and extensions.
- The Affordable Housing and Homelessness team monitors the use and performance of City-led extreme weather supports and makes service changes depending on need.
- The Affordable Housing and Homelessness team leads the procurement and contract management of partners in the extreme weather response.
- The Affordable Housing and Homelessness team leads the logistics and route planning for transportation supports offered. This is done annually in consultation with relevant business areas, healthcare providers and the social service sector.
- The Affordable Housing and Homelessness team collaborates with social agency partners and Indigenous governments to support communication efforts and the dissemination of service information on resource cards. Additionally, ongoing discussions about partnership opportunities and service provision ensure services are complimentary and not duplicative.
- Staff at public City facilities, such as libraries, recreation centres and City Hall ensure access for people seeking respite, handing out water bottles and N95 masks and upholding the principles of Policy C620A in their interactions.
- 211 and 24/7 Crisis Diversion teams connect vulnerable individuals to safe transportation, shelter and the support they need.
- Transit Peace Officers patrol in uniform on ETS vehicles and property including buses, LRT and transit stations to create safe environments and provide customer assistance. Transit Peace Officers also connect vulnerable people sheltering in LRT stations with winter shelter shuttles during LRT station closure.

Evaluation and Monitoring

Performance measures and targets are established from historic data to evaluate the effectiveness of the City's extreme weather response and to support continuous improvement through program adjustments. The measures evaluate access to resources for individuals experiencing homelessness during extreme weather relative to baseline conditions. The goal is to expand accessible supports that protect vulnerable individuals from weather-related injuries. The evaluation and monitoring on the City's extreme weather response will include the following:

- Winter shelter shuttle stops
- Winter shelter shuttle usage
- Annual survey for shuttle riders to inform service
- Temporary emergency shelter usage
- Client satisfaction survey of temporary emergency shelter
- Average distance between respite facilities
- Number of email subscriptions for extreme weather notifications
- Litres of water used at each water station
- Number of water bottles handed out at City facilities
- Number of N95 masks handed out at City facilities

In addition, this is supplemented by ongoing feedback from partnering social service agencies and diverse internal business areas that collaborate on delivering the response. Feedback can include qualitative data on user experiences, identification of emerging needs or service gaps, and practical recommendations for refining procedures and resource allocation to ensure continuous quality improvement and responsiveness of the services provided.

Definitions

- **Extreme Weather Condition:** Anticipated weather or environmental events that pose a significant threat to public health and safety. This is exclusive of natural disasters or emergency events such as tornadoes and floods.
- **Respite:** a short, temporary period of relief, rest, or pause from harsh, unpleasant, or intense atmospheric conditions, such as extreme heat, cold or poor air quality