

# Saskatoon's Cold Weather Strategy 2016



***A Community Plan to help Individuals and Families  
Experiencing Homelessness during Cold Weather***

*Last updated: December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

# Contents

- Background ..... 3
- Principles ..... 3
- Cold Weather Alert ..... 3
- Target Groups ..... 4
- Transportation ..... 4
- Warm-Up Locations ..... 4
- Communication ..... 4
- Strategy Evaluation and Feedback ..... 4
- Members of the Cold Weather Strategy Committee ..... 4
- Become a Member of the Cold Weather Strategy Advisory Team ..... 4
- Appendix A – Cold Weather Alert – Step by Step ..... 5
- Appendix B – Cold Weather Alert Triggers ..... 6
- Appendix C – List of Target Groups ..... 7
- Appendix D – List of Transportation Providers ..... 9
- Appendix E – List of Warm-up Locations ..... 10

## Background

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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 at a meeting on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

This strategy is designed to work with existing services and to ensure services work together so everyone sleeps in a safe place on a cold night in Saskatoon.

## Principles

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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.

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 bed or a cot, not just a mat on the floor or a chair;
- Everyone is allowed access to emergency shelter including intoxicated persons or those previously placed on a "**do not admit**" list from shelters;
- Family relationships should be respected: families and couples should be able to stay together;
- Warm, indoor spaces should be available 24 hours a day;
- 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

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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.***

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

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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

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Homeless individuals and families who need cold weather services may be too far away to walk so free transportation is necessary. **A list of transportation providers is in Appendix D.**

## Warm-Up Locations

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

## Communication

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Business cards 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.

## Strategy Evaluation and Feedback

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Starting in 2017, the Cold Weather Strategy Committee will meet twice annually, in April and October. 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

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|---|---|
| ➤ City of Saskatoon – Emergency Measures Organization (EMO)   | ➤ Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership |
| ➤ Community Support Officers (CSO)                            | ➤ Saskatoon Indian Métis Friendship Centre  |
| ➤ CUMFI   | ➤ Saskatoon Police Service                  |
| ➤ EGADZ   | ➤ SWITCH                                    |
| ➤ Ministry of Social Services                                 | ➤ The Bridge on 20 <sup>th</sup> Street     |
| ➤ Salvation Army  | ➤ The Lighthouse Supported Living           |
| ➤ Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service                       | ➤ United Way of Saskatoon and Area          |
| ➤ Saskatoon Health Region – Brief Detox, Street Outreach Team | ➤ Westside Community Clinic                 |
|   | ➤ YWCA                                      |

## Become a Member of the Cold Weather Strategy Advisory Team

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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 Susan Michell at [susan.michell@saskatoon.ca](mailto:susan.michell@saskatoon.ca) with updated contact information and preferred method of contact (alerts are typically sent out via text and email).

## Appendix A – Cold Weather Alert – Step by Step

<b>Monday to Friday</b>	<b><i>The Saskatoon Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) will automatically trigger a Cold Weather Alert to the CWA Team using the criteria listed in Appendix B.</i></b>
<b>Weekends &amp; Holidays</b>	<b><i>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></b>
<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></b>	

When triggered, the Cold Weather Alert process will occur as follows:

- ***A Cold Weather Alert Message will be sent:***
  - **TEXT/EMAIL TITLE:** Cold Weather Alert
  - **TEXT SUBJECT:** Cold weather conditions. Follow instructions in the 2016 Cold Weather Strategy. Check Email instructions
  - **EMAIL SUBJECT:** Cold weather conditions exist. Follow instructions in the 2016 Cold Weather Strategy. If needed, check email for attachments. *(The email will include the Assessment Form and the 2016 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 and ray.unrau@saskatoon.ca ONLY IF YOUR AGENCY IS HAVING AN ISSUE OR IS REQUESTING A CONFERENCE CALL. OTHERWISE, NO RESPONSE IS REQUIRED.***
- ***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 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 shelter beds, report on observations of known homeless individuals, groups or encampments and share other relevant information.

### **Important**

- Members of the conference call 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 Salvation Army. The agency initiating the alert will chair the call. EMO will participate on the call. Other emergency services will be included as necessary.***

## Appendix B – Cold Weather Alert Triggers

The Saskatoon Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) or the Community Support Officers (CSO) will trigger a Cold Weather Alert to the CWA Team using any of the following criteria:

Trigger Type	Threshold Criteria
<b>Very Cold Temperatures within a 24-hour Period</b>	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 ( <a href="https://weather.gc.ca/forecast/hourly/sk-40_metric_e.html">https://weather.gc.ca/forecast/hourly/sk-40_metric_e.html</a> )
<b>Extreme Cold Warning from Environment Canada</b>	When the air temperature or wind chill is expected to reach minus 40°C for at least two hours. <i>(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.)</i>
<b>Snowfall Warning from Environment Canada</b>	When 10 cm or more of snow falls within 12 hours or less.
<b>Winter Storm Warning from Environment Canada</b>	When severe and potentially dangerous winter weather conditions are expected, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A major snowfall (25 cm or more within a 24-hour period);</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• Blizzard conditions may be part of an intense winter storm, in which case a blizzard warning is issued instead of a winter storm warning.</li> </ul>
<b>Weather Warning from Environment Canada</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A generic weather warning may be issued for extreme weather events for which there is no suitable warning type, because they rarely occur.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

***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 – 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:

<p><b>SCREEN FOR BRIEF DETOX</b></p> <p><i>Client presentation....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Agreeing to service</li> <li>➤ Intoxicated</li> <li>➤ Coherent</li> <li>➤ Able to communicate</li> <li>➤ Able to ambulate               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Can transport themselves unassisted</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ History of seizures or history of medical risk</li> </ul>	<p><b>SCREEN FOR LIGHTHOUSE</b></p> <p><i>Client presentation....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Agreeing to service</li> <li>➤ Intoxicated</li> <li>➤ Coherent</li> <li>➤ Able to Communicate</li> <li>➤ Ambulatory – not confined to bed or wheelchair</li> </ul>
<p><b>SCREEN FOR EMS (CALL 9-1-1)</b></p> <p><i>Client presentation....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ABCD's (Airway, Breathing, Circulation, Deadly Bleed)</li> <li>➤ Unconscious/unresponsive</li> <li>➤ Significant trauma or illness</li> <li>➤ Semi-conscious, i.e. dazed &amp; confused, unable to stand or complete simple tasks, lack of coherency, etc.</li> <li>➤ No or labored breathing</li> <li>➤ Suspected drug overdose</li> <li>➤ Extreme agitation/confusion</li> <li>➤ Experiencing hallucinations</li> <li>➤ Experiencing seizures</li> <li>➤ Vomiting or evidence of vomitus</li> </ul>	<p><b>SCREEN FOR POLICE</b></p> <p><i>Client presentation...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hostile</li> <li>➤ Violent</li> <li>➤ Requires Detainment – i.e. wanted person, court conditions, etc.</li> </ul>

**Continued on the next page...**

## **Additional Accommodation for People Who Are Intoxicated**

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

## **People who are on a “Do Not Admit” List from Shelters**

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People placed on a “Do Not Admit” list at a shelter will be allowed to stay at The Lighthouse and Salvation Army. These people will be monitored, frisked for illegal substances, etc. as required.

## **People who choose not to access services**

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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 Lighthouse and 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**

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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 difficulty. 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.

## **People who need 24-hour access to warm spaces**

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In cold weather, the Salvation Army and The Lighthouse relax requirements that residents leave the building during the daytime.

## **Pet owners**

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Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service has pet carriers and a relationship with the SPCA who will keep pets until they can be reunited with their owners.

## **Appendix D – List of Transportation Providers**

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Some individuals experiencing homelessness need cold weather services that may be too far away to walk, so free transportation is necessary.

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

### **Lighthouse Mobile Outreach (actively seeks people who may be at risk): (306) 653-0538**

- 8:00am – 12:00am (Midnight)

### **EGADZ Outreach Van: (306) 221-3719**

- Monday – Friday
  - 9:30am – 1:00am
- Saturday
  - 5:00pm – 1:00am
- Sunday
  - 4:00pm – 12:00am (Midnight)

### **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.

## Appendix E – List of Warm-up Locations

<p><b>Salvation Army</b> 339 Avenue C South (306) 244-6280</p>	<p><b>Friendship Inn</b> 619 20<sup>th</sup> Street West (306) 242-5122</p>	<p><b>Saskatoon Indian &amp; Métis Friendship Centre</b> 168 Wall Street (306) 244-0174</p>
<p><b>Hours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Everyday</li> <li>➤ 24 Hours</li> </ul>	<p><b>Hours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Everyday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 8am - 2pm</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Meals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Breakfast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 8am - 9am</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Lunch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 11:45am - 1:15pm</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Hours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Monday - Friday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 8:30am - 9pm</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 9am - 4pm</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Sunday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 12pm – 7pm</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Meals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Tuesday &amp; Thursday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 4:30pm</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>The Bridge</b> 1008 20<sup>th</sup> Street West (306) 382-2855</p>		<p><b>Saskatoon (Westside) Community Clinic</b> 1528 20<sup>th</sup> Street West</p>
<p><b>Hours (Closed Friday)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Monday - Thursday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 8am - 2pm</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Sunday Church Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2pm</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Evening Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Monday (Kids Club) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 7pm – 9pm</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Tuesday (Men’s Bible Study) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 7pm – 9pm</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Wednesday (Adult Bible Study) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 6:30pm – 9pm</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Thursday (Women’s Arise – kids welcome) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 6pm – 9pm</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Friday (Youth Programs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 6pm – 10pm</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Meals (on days open)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Breakfast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mon – Thurs: 8:30am – 9:30am</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Lunch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mon – Thurs: 12pm – 1:30pm</li> <li>○ Saturday: 12pm – 3pm</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<p><b><u>Westside Clinic - (306) 664-4310</u></b></p> <p><b>Morning Hours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Monday – Friday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 9:30am – 12pm</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Afternoon Hours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Monday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 1pm – 4:30pm</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Wednesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2pm – 4:30pm</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Tuesday, Thursday, Friday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 1pm – 5pm</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b><u>SWITCH - (306) 664-4310</u></b></p> <p><b>Afternoon Hours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Monday &amp; Wednesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 5:30pm – 8pm</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 12:30pm – 3pm</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Note: SWITCH is closed all holidays and holiday weekends, as well as from December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 to January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017</p>