

Detroit Continuum of Care

SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

Overview

The Detroit Continuum of Care Severe Weather Policy is a protocol to engage, transport, and shelter people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the city of Detroit, Hamtramck, Highland Park who might otherwise remain outdoors during periods of severe weather. Remaining outdoors during severe weather conditions can lead to serious and life-threatening conditions and require the Homelessness Response System to respond accordingly.

This policy outlines the minimum requirements for the emergency response providers, which include outreach, shelter, and warming center providers. The Continuum of Care (CoC) and the City of Detroit acknowledge that severe weather conditions can be challenging for all, including unsheltered individuals, current shelter clients, and providers.

Severe weather is broken down into three categories, Code Blue for severe cold weather and Code Red for severe hot weather. All categories are defined below and were informed by the NOAA. These situations allow clients to remain indoors during the day and prohibits terminations from emergency shelter during severe weather to ensure the safety of all.

The dedication of and implementation of this protocol by shelter, warming center, and outreach providers is crucial to keeping people safe and alive during these times. Any questions can be directed to the City of Detroit's Homelessness Manager.

Definitions

Emergency Response Provider- Shelter, outreach, and warming center providers funded through state or federal grants.

Community Provider- The network of organizations that provide services, formally or informally to individuals experiencing homelessness who do not receive federal funds for this purpose.

Code Blue- A weather emergency notice is issued when:

- The temperature drops to **20 degrees Fahrenheit or below**, including National Weather Service calculations for wind chill values between the hours of 4pm and 8am; and/or
- **Ice storms** or **freezing rain** is expected; and/or
- 6 or more inches of **snow** is expected

Code Red- A weather emergency notice is issued when:

- A heat index of **105 degrees** is predicted for two hours or more by the National Weather Service

City of Detroit Responsibilities

The City of Detroit has accepted responsibility for confirming that providers are aware of severe weather situations and that each entity takes appropriate action per this policy. During episodes of severe weather, the City of Detroit will notify providers via email that the severe weather policy is in effect. Notification will be provided in three parts via email:

1. First, the City will issue a warning notification stating that severe weather is expected in 2-3 days.
2. Second, the City will notify providers when the severe weather policy is in effect.
3. Finally, the City will email providers when the severe weather declaration is lifted.

When appropriate, additional cooling centers and/or non-traditional warming centers (e.g. churches) operated by community providers will be sent via email to all system partners. The notification will include the address, phone number, and contact persons for each location to ensure effective coordination.

At the City of Detroit's discretion, additional outreach efforts and/or emergency shelter beds may be mobilized. In this circumstance, the City of Detroit will ensure that the greater community receives notification of the weather emergency, shelter locations, and who to contact to engage with outreach services.

Emergency Response Provider Responsibilities

Emergency response providers play a crucial role in keeping people safe during severe weather. To ensure appropriate mobilization, each provider must designate a contact person who will notify staff at their respective programs of the declaration of severe weather and ensure implementation of this policy. If this contact person changes, it is the agency's responsibility to notify the City of Detroit's Homelessness Solutions Manager of this change immediately. The expectations of each sector of emergency response providers are outlined below.

Emergency Shelter Providers

- Curfews must be lifted to ensure that households can access emergency shelter throughout the night.
- During severe weather shelters must not exit individuals, either voluntarily or involuntarily, out of shelter. If after the 90 day time frame has expired and there are not other shelter bed(s) available for the household, the agency would be required to keep the household until after the severe weather has passed. If a household wants to leave shelter, staff must ensure that the household has transportation and a safe place to stay for the night. This can be accomplished by providing bus tickets, making sure the household can call family/friends or transportation services, or providing direct transportation.
- No shelter suspensions or bans can be carried out during severe weather – clients who have been banned can return to the shelter for the night in question, if necessary. This would most likely occur if a client presented at shelter during the weekend or after CAM

business hours. Clients can be referred to CAM the following day for a different shelter bed. If a client becomes physically violent, staff are encouraged to call the police

- Per existing protocol, any household that presents at shelter outside of CAM business hours is allowed to stay at the shelter for that night, as long as space permits. If a shelter does not have space during severe weather, the agency must either a) let the household remain at the shelter, utilizing an air mattresses or another arrangement for overnight accommodations; or b) secure another shelter bed and arrange for transportation to that shelter.
- Shelter residents cannot be asked to leave the building during the day when Severe Weather is in effect. Residents must be allowed to remain indoors, but does not necessarily have to include access to the shelter area. Other options could include the lobby, dining hall, or community room.

Warming Center Providers

Warming Centers provide vital shelter space during the winter months, mid-November through March. Warming Centers must adhere to the same responsibilities as Emergency Shelter (as listed above), with the additions of the first two bullets below:

- Warming centers are required to take as many clients as possible, within the Building, Safety Engineering and Environmental Department (BSEED) restrictions.
- Anyone in need of a shelter bed can walk into a warming center without undergoing a complete HMIS intake for the night in question. If the household wishes to stay in the warming center for additional nights staff can complete at intake at that time.

Outreach Providers

- Between November and March, outreach providers are required to establish and share a calendar to provide after-hours coverage seven nights a week.
- Navigation-Only teams will be expected to support Street Outreach efforts during Severe Weather.
- Providers must make contact with all unsheltered individuals on their caseload and/or other individuals that they are aware of to ensure their safety and bring them into shelter.
- Providers must coordinate with each other regarding unsheltered individuals who are refusing shelter in order to provide continuous engagement and ensure their safety.
- Outreach providers may be called to work additional shifts or during days or times outside their normal work schedule in order to provide the most coverage possible. To prepare for this, providers are encouraged to build in additional funds for salary or to make budget modifications if necessary.