

SMC 18.05.020 Compliance Plan

City of Spokane

2024

BACKGROUND

This plan serves to meet the requirement per [SMC Chapter 18.05](#) to outline the plan for the following year, regarding warming center, cooling center and safer air center operations.

EXTREME WEATHER CENTERS

The primary function of extreme weather sheltering (per SMC) is to provide *temporary relief to people who are generally exposed to or vulnerable to extreme weather.*

To support community members in need, the city works to create regional community centers where housed people who are vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather can go to cool off, to warm up, or to escape poor air quality during wildfire smoke events.

COOLING CENTERS

Cooling centers provide a temporary temperature-controlled space to community members during the hottest part of the daytime, during periods of extreme heat. Cooling centers are unique from other year-round or temporary supplemental shelters in that the goal is to provide respite during the hottest hours of the daytime. Therefore, public facilities that are already staffed and in operation (e.g., libraries, community centers, faith-based organizations) are often utilized to provide expanded access to air-conditioned public spaces during daytime hours.

SAFER AIR CENTERS

Safe(r) air centers provide temporary shelter to community members experiencing homelessness or living unsheltered when air quality conditions are unhealthy or hazardous to human health. This need could result from dangerous AQI levels from wildfire smoke, larger HazMat incidents, volcanic activity (dust and ash) and otherwise.

This type of shelter is leveraged when it is determined that the region's existing homeless shelter system does not have capacity (beds), to provide the at-risk

population (people experiencing homelessness and people living in non-traditional spaces like RVs) with safer air space. As smoke or other air conditions don't necessarily dissipate during nighttime hours, the need for safer air centers is a 24/7 operation, until AQI returns to non-harmful levels.

The general approach to this resource is to surge or flex existing homeless shelter spaces, as those spaces already have staffing and wrap around supportive services for the population in need.

WARMING CENTERS

Warming centers provide temporary shelter to community members during extreme cold winter conditions (e.g., snow, ice, very low temperatures). Generally, community members experiencing homelessness represent the primary users of warming centers. Therefore, the existing (homeless) shelter system of a region will pre-identify ways to expand the shelter system capacity to meet seasonal cold weather-related capacity needs (i.e., reduce barriers to entry). Additional temporary shelter spaces are sometimes activated when it is determined that the region's existing shelter system does not have the ability to expand capacity (available beds) safely (i.e., enough operational staff to meet guest needs).

Community centers are also used to offer daytime warming to all community members (housed and otherwise). These centers have tabletop games, books, computer access and social services. In addition, such spaces are accessible, known and trusted locations for community members.

CURRENT PLAN

COOLING CENTERS

PROCESS IN PLACE

- ***Operational Monitoring***- The city will be implementing an emergency operations center (EOC) model, to oversee the cooling center operations and needs, as they arise. This process allows for close engagement with external support partners, for better organizing resources and for leveraging the regional system for support.
- ***Facilities***: Currently, the city leverages (city-staffed) public libraries for cooling center spaces. In addition, community centers are generally open to the public as cooling center space. Occasionally, when existing faith programming is not running, faith-based organizations are sometimes willing to open their spaces for cooling centers.
- ***Transportation***: In previous years (2021 – 2023) the Spokane Transit Authority (STA) has provided fare waivers for anyone traveling to a cooling center space.
- ***Operators/staff***: City library staff that are already working in the city owned facility spaces which serve as cooling center spaces. When guest volumes are expected to surge, the city can support by engaging community volunteers and supplemental security staff. For 2023, there were no surges in guest volume at the libraries during extreme heat events.
- ***Public communications***: The city communications team puts out public messaging in anticipation of upcoming extreme hot weather, based on [National Weather Service \(NWS\)](#) heat event alerts. In addition, the city publicly shares information about the activated cooling center spaces through its partners to leverage their communication channels, including those working directly with unhoused community members. The city's first responders also conduct outreach to individuals in vulnerable situations.
- ***Preparedness education***: The city works closely with the Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) to ensure public education and outreach is conducted before and during summer seasonal heat. Both the city and SRHD push educational messaging on various channels, to ensure that all demographics of the community receive the information.

ONGOING WORK

- **Facilities:** As cooling center space is generally offered during daytime hours, the city will continue to identify city-owned and already staffed facilities to leverage for cooling center space. The city continues to try and identify new community resources, to offer additional cooling spaces.
- **Operators/staff:** The city often leans on the existing staff of city owned facilities to oversee guest populations (sometimes with the addition of contracted security, when needed). In addition, the city is working to pre-identify and work with existing volunteer organizations like the medical reserve corps, to have a ready list of volunteers for activation of cooling spaces.
- **Public communications:** The city communications team puts out public messaging in anticipation of upcoming extreme hot weather, based on [National Weather Service \(NWS\)](#) heat event alerts. In addition, the city publicly shares information about the activated cooling center spaces. Communications channels included:
 - City's Community Update email newsletter
 - CHHS Department newsletter (sent to internal/external stakeholder groups, shelters, etc.)
 - Social media
 - City websites - Hazard Sheltering
 - 311 / MySpokane
 - Spokane Homeless Coalition
 - 211 state resource system
 - Other government agencies
 - Spokane Public Library
 - City first responders directly with vulnerable individuals
- **Transportation:** The city will continue working with STA to find ways to accommodate free or low-cost solutions to getting to a cooling space, particularly for seniors and those using the paratransit.

SAFER AIR CENTERS

PROCESS IN PLACE

- **Operational Monitoring-** The city will be implementing an emergency operations center (EOC) model, to oversee the safer air center operations and needs, as they arise. This process allows for close engagement with external support partners, for better organizing resources and for leveraging the regional system for support.

- **Facilities:** The need for 24/7 sheltering from wildfire smoke is primarily for community members experiencing homelessness or living unsheltered. For this reason, the process is to surge existing homeless shelters to meet the wrap around services need for this population at risk for adverse health effects from poor air quality. Most housed community members are unlikely to leave their homes for 24/7 sheltering related to wildfire smoke.¹
- **Operators/staff:** Surge discussions will occur with existing or new homeless shelter operators to work to surge existing shelter capacity for this need.
- **Food/meal providers:** Existing contracted homeless shelter providers or new providers will be responsible for contracting with meal vendors.
- **Public communications:** The city communications team puts out public messaging as early as possible during hazardous AQI events based on [AirNow](#) data in real time. In addition, the city publicly shares information about the safer air spaces. Communications channels included:
 - City's Community Update email newsletter
 - CHHS Department newsletter (sent to internal/external stakeholder groups, shelters, etc.)
 - Social media
 - City websites - Hazard Sheltering
 - 311 / MySpokane
 - Spokane Homeless Coalition
 - 211 state resource system
 - Other government agencies
 - Spokane Public Library
 - City first responders directly with vulnerable individuals
- **Domestic pet accommodations:** Domestic pets are allowed at the Trent Resource and Assistance Center (TRAC).

ONGOING WORK

- **Facilities:** The general approach to this resource is to surge or flex existing homeless shelter spaces, as those spaces already have the infrastructure in place to activate on short notice, including staffing and wrap around supportive services for the population in need.
- **Operators/staff:** Surge discussions will occur with existing or new homeless shelter operators to work to surge existing shelter capacity for this need.

¹ Community Survey Data Collection, Gonzaga's Center for Climate, Society and the Environment, 2023.

- **Public communications:** The city communications team will begin preparing public education messaging in early summer. When the AQI begins to climb to more hazardous levels, the city will begin sharing information about supplementary indoor safer air spaces like community centers, libraries, commerce centers, religiously affiliated facilities, and the like. The city will also conduct an outreach and messaging campaign to alert community members experiencing homelessness or living unsheltered about surge capacity at existing shelters and opportunities where shelters reduce their high barrier status temporarily.
- **Transportation:** The city will continue working with STA to find ways to accommodate free or low-cost solutions to getting to a safer air space.

WARMING CENTERS

PROCESS IN PLACE

- **Operational Monitoring-** The city will be implementing an emergency operations center (EOC) model, to oversee the warming center operations and needs, as they arise. This process allows for close engagement with external support partners, for better organizing resources and for leveraging the regional system for support.
- **Facilities:** The need for 24/7 sheltering from cold temperatures is primarily for community members experiencing homelessness or living unsheltered. For this reason, the process is to surge existing homeless shelters to meet the wrap around services need for this population at risk for adverse health effects from cold weather. Most housed community members are unlikely to leave their homes for 24/7 sheltering related to cold temperatures.
- **Operators/staff:** By leveraging the existing shelter system and associated infrastructure, there is limited need for contracting with additional operators/staff.
- **Food/meal providers:** By leveraging the existing shelter system, there is no need for contracting with additional meal providers.
- **Public communications:** The city communications team puts out public messaging in anticipation of upcoming extreme cold weather, based on [National Weather Service \(NWS\)](#) data. In addition, the city publicly shares information about the activated warming spaces within the shelter system. Communications channels included:
 - City's Community Update email newsletter
 - CHHS Department newsletter (sent to internal/external stakeholder groups, shelters, etc.)

- Social media
- City websites - Hazard Sheltering
- 311 / MySpokane
- Spokane Homeless Coalition
- 211 state resource system
- Other government agencies
- Spokane Public Library
- City first responders directly with vulnerable individuals
- **Domestic pet accommodations:** Domestic pets are allowed at the Trent Resource and Assistance Center (TRAC).

ONGOING WORK

- **Facilities:** The city will continue to leverage the existing shelter system and related capacity to meet the surge needs related to warming center space.
- **Operators/staff:** The city will continue working with the contracted operators for the existing shelters within the city.
- **Public communications:** The city will reference the [Shelter me Spokane](#) web tool, to ensure there is adequate space within the homeless shelter system for any surge needs.
- **Transportation:** The city is working to identify ways to work with community partners like the public transit system to provide ways to support transportation to the identified venues for warming centers.
- **Other outreach:** The city will run internal (city employees) and public-facing donation drives, for warming resources (gloves, beanies, socks, hand warmers etc.). The items collected through these drives will be disseminated to the existing shelters and through outreach activities. Outreach activities will include leveraging the city's HOT team and external Homeless Outreach Teams to disseminate warming resources to community members who may not be utilizing traditional shelters. The city will also offer pop-up warming booths throughout targeted areas, to supply hot beverages and to disseminate warming resources collected through the donation drives and resources purchased through city resources.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING IN PLACE

In addition to the current planning listed above, the city has also completed the following pre-event planning:

- Formalized “trigger” events/thresholds, to guide shared planning steps for each type of potential extreme weather event (i.e., high temperatures, very low temperatures, and air quality index values) in compliance with local ordinances
- Developed “roles and responsibilities” tool for volunteers
- Established a process for post-activation assessments, using after-action reports and improvement plans
- Outlined considerations for access and functional needs considerations for congregate standalone center activations
- Created a process for executive leadership briefings during congregate standalone center surge events
- Created a process for notification of external support partners during activations, such as healthcare facilities, medical transport partners, public health partners, community resource partners, and english second language support agencies
- Created a list of organizations that donated resources during the 2023 activation season, for future outreach and engagement

APPENDIX A: SPOKANE MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTER 18.05

- City Council finds that the City must approach the emergency weather sheltering issue with the foresight, increased resources, and prior planning which is a characteristic of prepared and resilient cities around the world, so that Spokane is ready at all times to handle the types of conditions that require the provision of emergency shelter for all people in Spokane who need it, including securing written agreements with private and government entities to provide additional shelter on short notice [\(18.05.010 E\)](#)
- City Council finds that providing protection to Spokane residents from extreme heat, cold and unsafe air is an essential government function [\(18.05.010 F\)](#)
- **Warming centers** sufficient to meet the shelter needs of **currently unsheltered homeless individuals and other vulnerable individuals seeking shelter** in Spokane will be **activated on each day during which the temperature is predicted by the National Weather Service to be 32 degrees Fahrenheit or lower and designated low-barrier shelter space was at ninety percent (90%) capacity or greater during the previous night**. The warming centers will operate at a minimum during the hours that temperatures are lower than thirty-two (32) degrees Fahrenheit. The City may, by contract with its center provider(s), raise the activation temperature for warming centers, but in no event will the activation temperature be lower than thirty-two (32) degrees Fahrenheit. [\(18.05.020 A1\)](#)
- **Cooling centers** sufficient to meet the **shelter needs of currently unsheltered homeless individuals and other vulnerable individuals seeking cooling shelter** within the City will be **activated when the temperature is predicted by the National Weather Service to be 95 (ninety-five) degrees Fahrenheit or higher for two (2) consecutive days or more**. The cooling centers will be operated at a minimum during all hours when the temperature is 95 (ninety-five) degrees Fahrenheit or higher. The City may, by contract with its center provider(s) extend the hours of operation and/or lower the activation temperature for cooling centers. The City should seek out a network of cooling center locations throughout the City at schools, libraries, churches and community centers and encourage other municipal governments to join in providing a regional cooling center network. [\(18.05.020 A2\)](#)
- Safe air centers **sufficient to meet the shelter needs of currently unsheltered homeless individuals seeking safe air shelter within the City** will be activated for the entire day on which the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency forecasts the current air quality index to reach 250 or higher. [\(18.05.020 A3\)](#)
- Emergency centers may also be activated by the Mayor or the Mayor's designee on any day in which a civil emergency or extreme storm or weather condition exists or is predicted to occur and which, in the determination of the Mayor or the Mayor's

designee, poses a severe threat to the health or safety of vulnerable and unsheltered homeless individuals and families in the City of Spokane. [\(18.05.020 A4\)](#)

- The **Community Health and Human Services (“CHHS”) Department shall implement the appropriate policies and procedures**, including without limitation making funding requests; recommendations regarding center providers; the designation of specific locations to be used as warming, cooling, and safe air centers; the arrangement of other appropriate measures to the City Council in order to carry out the specific provisions and intent of this section; and shall continuously maintain contracts and/or appropriate non-monetary agreements scalable to the need for emergency warming, cooling and safe air center provider services, with no lapse in coverage at any point in time throughout each year, regardless of whether the services are provided under contract, by interlocal agreement or by city staff. [\(18.05.020 B\)](#)
- No later than **September 30 of each year, and annually thereafter, the City shall publish and disseminate the City’s plan for emergency warming, cooling and safe air centers for the coming year**, which shall provide details of the name(s) and location(s) of center providers and similar resources, the capacity and scalability of all emergency centers, by type and population(s) focus (if any), activation criteria, cost, funding source(s), partnerships and the communications and publicity plan to ensure that people who are vulnerable or are experiencing homelessness will know where they can obtain these services. [\(18.05.020 C\)](#)