

# Emergency Weather Community Response Network

2023-24 Guidebook



Humboldt  
Housing &  
Homelessness  
Coalition

# Emergency Weather Community Response Network

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## **I. Humboldt County Emergency Weather Community Response Network**

DHHS's Humboldt County Emergency Weather Community Response Network (EWCRN) project aims to coordinate and support nonprofits, government agencies and faith-based organizations throughout the county that operate emergency programs during inclement weather. These various groups work diligently to respond to the needs of individuals in their local communities seeking respite. The goals of the EWCRN are to support the efforts of these agencies, streamline communication, share best practices and expand programs so that those in need throughout Humboldt County can find safety and comfort during the cold winter months as well as during the sweltering heat of summer.

There are many challenges in opening and operating an emergency weather center. Perhaps the most unrelenting challenge is timing. There is a relatively short window of time (sometimes just a few hours) from when extreme weather is predicted to when a center would ideally open. ~~And~~ once extreme weather is anticipated, coordination is needed to ensure staffing capacity is available to operate. If there is capacity to operate, ~~then~~ a decision can be made as to open the center for that day/coming days.

A second pressing challenge is sharing accurate information quickly with those in need of respite. People experiencing homelessness sometimes have little contact with service providers, have difficulty accessing phones/emails and are often on the move. In anticipating these obstacles, this project aims to develop processes that get accurate information to local partners (outreach workers, dining facilities, day centers) as soon as possible. In addition, local media outlets will be used (radio, online publications, social media) so that a broader audience can be reached.

Most of these projects run largely on volunteer efforts and donations. Without dedicated and trained volunteers, the programs would not function. A key aim of this project is to encourage volunteerism and to share best practices regarding volunteer recruitment and retainment.

Organizing, operating and safely welcoming individuals to utilize an emergency weather center is no easy feat, but the efforts are lifesaving. In addition, coordinating these efforts sheds light on the need for these types of services for the most vulnerable individuals in our community.

### **A. Emergency Weather Community Response Network Committee**

The EWCRN Committee is a workgroup of the Humboldt Housing & Homelessness Coalition (HHHC). Meetings take place every Monday at 11 a.m. via Zoom and in person at 507 F St., Eureka. DHHS Program Manager Aaron Zell facilitates the group and can be reached at [AZell@co.humboldt.ca.gov](mailto:AZell@co.humboldt.ca.gov) for more information.

### **B. Regional Structure**

Coordination of EWCRN's efforts use a regional approach. Currently the regions are Northern Humboldt, Eureka, Eel River Valley and Southern Humboldt. Efforts are underway to locate a center in the Eastern region, likely in Willow Creek.

Emergency weather centers are activated based on predefined thresholds determined by each region (see regional overview below for specific criteria).

### C. Regional Coordinators

Region	Coordinator	Email
Northern	<b>Anjali Browning</b> Arcata House Partnership	<a href="mailto:ABrowning@arcatahouse.org">ABrowning@arcatahouse.org</a>
Eureka	<b>Jeff Davis</b> City of Eureka <b>Jacob Rosen</b> City of Eureka	<a href="mailto:JDavis@eurekaca.gov">JDavis@eurekaca.gov</a> <a href="mailto:JRosen@eurekaca.gov">JRosen@eurekaca.gov</a>
Eel River Valley	<b>Rhonda Lewis</b> Fortuna Adventist Community Services	<a href="mailto:RLewis@fortunaacs.org">RLewis@fortunaacs.org</a>
Southern	<b>Chris Andrews</b> Redway Baptist Church <b>Patte Rae</b> SoHum Housing Opportunities	<a href="mailto:Andrewschristopher1409@gmail.com">Andrewschristopher1409@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:Patte_ca@hotmail.com">Patte_ca@hotmail.com</a>
Eastern	TBD	

### D. NORTHERN HUMBOLDT

#### Regional Coordinator:

Anjali Browning, Arcata House Partnership

[ABrowning@ArcataHouse.org](mailto:ABrowning@ArcataHouse.org)

<https://www.arcatahouse.org/>

#### Opening Guidelines:

The Arcata House Partnership (AHP) emergency warming center will be activated when any of the following is predicted:

- Temperatures at or below 34 degrees
- Temperatures at or below 36 degrees when rain is expected
- Wind speeds more than 30 mph or winds that create a wind chill factor of 34 degrees
- One inch or more of rain and or multiple days of rain.

If one of the above guidelines is anticipated, and there is adequate staffing, the warming center will open.

#### Notice:

Once the decision to open is made, the regional coordinator will notify the EWCRN Coordinator, who will notify other EWCRN workgroup members, HHHC members, community partners and the DHHS Communications Group for information dissemination throughout the community.

**Individuals seeking shelter will be directed to Arcata House Partnership's Annex at 501 Ninth St., Arcata by 4 p.m. for sign-ups and transportation to the warming center site.**

**Volunteers:** Volunteers are needed to operate the warming center. If interested, please contact [volunteer@arcatahouse.org](mailto:volunteer@arcatahouse.org) or 707-613-0143.

**Donations:** Ponchos, Tarps, Tents, Hand-Warmers, Beanies, Sweats, Sweatshirts

## **E. EUREKA**

### **Regional Coordinators:**

Jeff Davis, City of Eureka, [JDavis@eureka.gov](mailto:JDavis@eureka.gov)

Jacob Rosen, City of Eureka, [JRosen@eureka.gov](mailto:JRosen@eureka.gov)

### **Opening Guidelines:**

The City of Eureka emergency warming overnight center will be activated when any of the following is predicted:

- Temperatures at or below 33 degrees
- Wind speeds in excess of 40 mph or winds that create a wind chill factor of 33 degrees
- One inch or more of rain between 4 p.m. and 4 a.m.

If one of the above guidelines is anticipated, and there is adequate staffing, the warming center will open.

**Notice:** Once the decision to open is made, the regional coordinator will notify the EWCRN Coordinator, who will notify other EWCRN workgroup members, HHHC members, community partners and the DHHS Communications Group for information dissemination throughout the community.

**Individuals seeking access to the program will be directed to one of four pick-up sites for transportation to the warming center site:**

- **6 p.m.**            **SVdP Dining Facility "Free Meal"**  
35 W. Third Street, Eureka
- **6:30 p.m.**       **Sacco Amphitheater**  
1101 Waterfront Drive, Eureka
- **7 p.m.**            **Hope Center**  
2933 H St., Eureka
- **7:30 p.m.**       **14<sup>th</sup> and Koster streets**  
DHHS General Assistance Campus

**All guests will be transported to SVdP Dining Room for breakfast and coffee in the morning at 8.**

**Volunteers:** Sign-up to volunteer at [EurekaWarmingCenter.com](http://EurekaWarmingCenter.com) or contact Robin Praszker at [rpraszker@eurekaca.gov](mailto:rpraszker@eurekaca.gov) or 707-441-4206.

**Donations:** Ponchos, Tarps, Tents, Hand-Warmers, Beanies, Sweats, Sweatshirts

## **F. EEL RIVER VALLEY**

### **Regional Coordinator:**

Rhonda Lewis, Fortuna Adventist Community Services

[RLewis@FortunaACS.com](mailto:RLewis@FortunaACS.com) or 707-725-1166

### **Opening Guidelines:**

The Fortuna Adventist Community Services warming overnight center will be activated when any of the following is predicted:

- Temperatures at or below 34 degrees
- Temperatures at or below 36 degrees when rain is expected
- Wind speeds more than 30 mph or winds that create a wind chill factor of 34 degrees
- One inch or more of rain and or multiple days of rain.

If one of the above guidelines is anticipated, and there is adequate staffing, the warming center will open.

**Notice:** Once the decision to open is made, the regional coordinator will notify the EWCRN Coordinator, who will notify other EWCRN workgroup members, HHHC members, community partners and the DHHS Communications Group for information dissemination throughout the community.

**Individuals seeking shelter will be directed to Fortuna Seventh Day Adventist Church, 2331 Rohnerville Road, Fortuna. The warming center will open at 6 p.m.**

**Volunteers:** Volunteers are needed to operate the warming center. Please contact Rhonda [RLewis@FortunaACS.com](mailto:RLewis@FortunaACS.com) if you are interested in volunteering.

**Donations:** Ponchos, Tarps, Tents, Hand-Warmers, Beanies, Sweats, Sweatshirts

## **G. SOUTHERN HUMBOLDT**

### **Regional Coordinators:**

Chris Andrews, Redway Baptist Church  
[Andrewschristopher1409@gmail.com](mailto:Andrewschristopher1409@gmail.com)

Patte Rae, SoHum Housing Opportunities  
[Patte\\_ca@hotmail.com](mailto:Patte_ca@hotmail.com)

### **Opening Guidelines:**

The Redway Baptist Church warming day center will be activated when any of the following is predicted:

- Temperatures at or below 34 degrees
- Temperatures at or below 36 degrees when rain is expected
- Wind speeds more than 30 mph or winds that create a wind chill factor of 34 degrees
- One inch or more of rain and or multiple days of rain.

If one of the above guidelines is anticipated, and there is adequate staffing, the warming center will open.

**Notice:** Once the decision to open is made, the regional coordinator will notify the EWCRN Coordinator, who will notify other EWCRN workgroup members, HHHC members, community partners and the DHHS Communications Group for information dissemination throughout the community.

**Individuals seeking respite will be directed to Redway Baptist Church, 1055 Redway Drive, Redway. The warming center will operate during the day (dawn to dusk).**

**Volunteers:** Volunteers are needed to operate the warming center. Please contact Chris Andrews at [Andrewschristopher1409@gmail.com](mailto:Andrewschristopher1409@gmail.com) if you are interested in volunteering.

**Donations:** Ponchos, Tarps, Tents, Hand-Warmers, Beanies, Sweats, Sweatshirts

### **H. Activation and Flow Chart**

When extreme weather is expected, a central goal of the EWCRN is to create a streamlined process for disseminating information to individuals seeking respite, local service providers and outreach teams. The EWCRN Regional Coordinators will monitor weather closely to determine if inclement weather is anticipated in their region. If the regional parameters for opening a center are met, the Regional Coordinator(s) will work with their staff/volunteers to determine if there is capacity to open that day. If the parameters are met and there is capacity, the Regional Coordinator will connect with the EWCRN Coordinator to announce that the extreme weather center will open along with relevant directions for individuals seeking respite.

# County of Humboldt Extreme Weather Shelter Flow Chart



## I. Notification and Outreach

Once the decision to open is made, the regional coordinator(s) will notify the EWC�N Coordinator, who will then notify other EWC�N workgroup members, HHC members, community partners and the DHHS Communications Group for information dissemination throughout the community.

## II. Resources for Volunteers

Volunteers are essential for the successful operation of all Emergency Weather Community Response Network sites. Providing a safe and pleasant environment for people who need safety from weather can be challenging, but the benefits are tremendous.

It is important to remember that these sites are not homeless shelters, but a place for all residents who need to escape hazardous weather conditions. It is true that most of the guests who utilize these centers have experienced homelessness. However, we do not provide social programs or counseling. Our goal is to provide a safe place for those who need respite from the storm. This could be people experiencing homelessness, those who do not have sufficient heat or those who have lost power in their homes.

Below are resources to orient volunteers to the types of rules in place at an emergency weather center, possible volunteer responsibilities, de-escalation techniques and ideas for providing meals.

### A. Understanding EWCRN Site Rules

Rules at the EWCRN sites will vary by location but share the central tenant of respect: all guests, volunteers, staff and host locations are to be treated with the utmost respect. Boundaries are put in place for all involved to keep processes fair and roles clearly defined.

All volunteers of the facility should be given an overview of the rules before their first shift. Ideally, orientation of site rules should be verbal between the site lead and the volunteer to allow for questions and to establish rapport. In addition, a paper copy of the rules should be made available to refer to when necessary for both volunteers and guests.

It can be difficult at times for new volunteers to keep boundaries in place, especially when dealing with individuals in severe need. For instance, a guest may ask a volunteer to charge their phone, though the charging area is closed. It may seem like a simple ask, but if permitted it may not be fair to others who also need to use the charging station. If there are ever situations where a volunteer is unsure about a particular rule, it is always advised to ask staff or the site lead. At times exceptions can be made, but it is important that the site team is aware and acknowledges when exceptions do occur.

Broadly speaking, the rules can be understood as follows:

- Respect yourself
- Respect others
- Respect staff
- Respect the facility.

### B. Volunteer Responsibilities

Each EWCRN site will have different volunteer responsibilities, but in general there will be three types of shifts: opening, mid-shift and closing. Below you will find samples of responsibilities for

all shifts as well as opening and closing tasks. The biggest responsibility of each shift is to make sure the EWCRN site is a safe place for all and that rules are followed.

### **1. Sample Responsibilities for All Shifts**

- Site Entrance - There should always be one volunteer at the entrance or within ear shot of the entrance, even after check in. This ensures that the door is answered if someone needs to be let in, such as the police who may be dropping someone off.
- Telephone Numbers - There are a few names and phone numbers that you may need during any shift. The list will vary depending on the site, however, there are some that will be consistent.
- Name Tags - One of the best ways to make a connection with the guests is to be sure that they know your name. This also helps with communication with other volunteers. Name tags will be provided and should be worn at all times.
- Maintaining a Log Book/Shift Notes - A log book should be used to note any actions or incidents that happen during your shift. Security patrols, guest incidents and any other activity should be noted in the log with the time of each occurrence.
- Maintain regular communications with the site lead. Provide site information, and discuss supply needs, problems and plans.
- Ensure that guests receive updated information about the weather and resources available to them.
- Monitor weather and response efforts, and plan for the closing of the center.
- Routinely inspect the safety and sanitation of the facility including the kitchen, dormitories, bathrooms, exterior and registration area, and ensure that health standards and guests' needs are being met.

### **2. Sample Responsibilities for Opening Shift**

The first shift is responsible for setting up and opening the center as well as checking in guests.

- Arrive on site at 5 p.m.
- Make a visual assessment of the conditions outside the facility in case any debris needs to be removed or the walkway is icy.
- Ensure all materials needed are available i.e., black plastic bags, duct tape and black markers, mats, blankets, cleaning supplies, coffee and supplies, granola bars, etc.
- Put on the coffee and hot water and set out any items to offer guests, if available.
- As the guests come in between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., one volunteer will log them into the center. The second will have them place their belongings (except medication, pillow, book, stuffed animal) into a large black plastic bag. It will be taped shut with the guest's name written on the tape with a ticket attached.
- Ensure guests are aware of all emergency exits in the building.
- Direct the guest to the sleeping area of the facility.
- Issue blankets and pillow if available.

- Turn over paperwork and keys (if necessary) to second shift volunteers. Brief the second shift on any incidents or special conditions.
- Turn off lights and electronics and lock the doors at 10 p.m.

### 3. Sample Responsibilities for Closing Shift

- Ensure security by making rounds throughout the facility.
- Complete paperwork.
- Wake up guests at 6 a.m. for 7 a.m. departure.
- Return all bagged items to the correct guest by checking names and ticket numbers.
- As each guest departs, they are to sign out on the Guest Sign-In Sheet. All belongings must leave with the guest. There should not be any bags remaining at the close of the shift.
- Ensure the building is clean and all trash has been picked up.
- Clean up the smoking area.
- Clean and stow all items including mats, snack supplies and any other items.
- Complete paperwork.
- Ensure doors and windows are locked. Return keys, if necessary, according to location plan.

### C. De-escalation Tips and Discussion

#### A. Be in Control of Yourself

- Appear calm, centered and self-assured, even if you don't feel it. Relax facial muscles and look confident. Your anxiety can make individuals feel anxious and unsafe and that can escalate aggression.
- Use a modulated, low monotonous tone of voice (our normal tendency is to have a high pitched, tight voice when upset, scared or nervous).
- Do not be defensive, even if the comments or insults are directed at you, they are not about you. Do not defend yourself or anyone else from insults, curses or misconceptions about their roles.
- Be aware of any resources available for back up. Know that you have the choice to leave, tell the person to leave or call 911 should de-escalation not be effective. Walk away to call 911. Never call 911 in front of the individual.
- Be very respectful even when firmly setting limits or calling for help. The agitated individual is very sensitive to feeling shamed and disrespected. We want him/her to know that it is not necessary to show us that they must be respected. We automatically treat them with dignity and respect.

#### B. The Physical Stance

- Always be at the same eye level. Encourage the person to be seated, but if he/she needs to stand, you stand up also.
- Allow extra physical space between you – about four times your usual

distance. Anger and agitation fill the extra space between you and the person.

- Do not stand full front to the person. Stand at an angle so you can sidestep away if needed.
- Do not maintain constant eye contact. Allow the person to break his/her gaze and look away.
- Do not point or shake your finger.
- DO NOT smile. This could look like mockery or anxiety.
- Do not touch – even if some touching is generally culturally appropriate and usual in your setting. Cognitive dysfunction in agitated people allow for easy misinterpretation of physical contact as hostile or threatening.
- Keep hands out of your pockets, up and available to protect yourself. It also demonstrates non-verbally, that you do not have a concealed weapon.
- Do not argue or try to convince. Instead, give choices e.g. empower
- Don't be defensive or judgmental.
- Don't be parental, join the resistance: You have a right to feel angry.

### **C. The De-Escalation Discussion**

- Remember that there is no content except trying to calmly bring the level of arousal down to baseline.
- Do not get loud or try to yell over a screaming person. Wait until he/she takes a breath, then talk. Speak calmly at an average volume.
- DO NOT answer abusive questions (e.g. "Why are all volunteers \_\_\_\_?") This question should get no response whatsoever.
- Explain limits and rules in an authoritative, firm, but always respectful tone. Give choices where possible in which both alternatives are safe ones (e.g. Would you like to continue our discussion calmly or would you prefer to stop now and try again when things can be more relaxed?)
- Empathize with feelings but not with behavior. (e.g. "I understand that you have every right to feel angry, but it is not okay for you to use abusive language.")
- Do not argue or try to convince.
- Wherever possible, tap into the person's cognitive mode: DO NOT ask, "Tell me how you feel? But instead: "Help me to understand what you are saying to me." People are not necessarily attacking you while they are telling you what they want you to know.
- Suggest alternative behaviors where appropriate e.g. "Would you like to take a break and have a cup of coffee (tepid and in a paper cup) or some water?"
- Give the consequences of inappropriate behavior without threats or anger.
- Trust your instincts. If you assess or feel that de-escalation is not working, STOP! You will know within 2 or 3 minutes if it's beginning to work. Tell the person to leave, escort him/her to the door, call for help or leave and call the police.

- There is nothing magic about talking someone down. You are transferring your sense of calm.
- Show genuine interest in what the individual wants to tell you, while being respectful and setting clear limits in the hope that the person actually wishes to respond positively to your respectful attention.
- Again, if at any time the individual threatens to harm him/herself or others, contact 911.

#### **D. Food Preparation and Donations**

Providing meals is not a requirement for operating an extreme weather center, but there are often volunteer groups willing and ready to cook and prepare for and serve those in need. Depending on capacity, some may offer coffee and tea, sack lunches or even hot meals. From experience, our extreme weather centers have noted that providing some sustenance goes a long way in keeping the centers peaceful and developing trust.

- 1. Coffee, Tea and Water:** Having hot and cold water available for guests is helpful in keeping individuals warm and hydrated during trying times. Keeping carafes full and easily accessible to guests is ideal and having reusable water bottles available helps too. Paper cups are often a needed supply for beverages.
- 2. Sack Lunches:** Sack lunches can be affordable to assemble and healthy and easy for guests to transport and eat later. It is important to try to keep the foods healthy and easy to chew. Some suggested items include: PB&J sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, cheese sticks, soft granola bars, V8 juices, bananas and mandarins.
- 3. Hot Meals:** A hot meal can make a world of difference. Some common meals that are easy and affordable to prepare are enchiladas, spaghetti and stews and rice.