



POLICY

Kings County Regional Emergency Management Comfort Centres / Emergency Shelters	
Policy Number 230-001	Supersedes Policy Number: Not Applicable
Effective Date: 2018-09-18	Approved by Council Motion Number: 27-09-18

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and information to Kings County Regional Emergency Management Personnel with regard to establishment and control of Comfort Centres and Emergency Shelters.

If an emergency happens in Kings County, it may take emergency workers some time to reach residents. All residents of Kings County should be prepared to take care of themselves and their families for a minimum of 72 hours.

During an emergency situation there may be the need for citizens to find respite from adverse weather conditions or in severe cases, temporary shelter. It is the direction of this policy to ensure that there are facilities throughout Kings County that are equipped for this purpose. For example, as a result of extreme weather events members of the public may find themselves without power, sometimes for extended periods, or otherwise affected by the climate. While these events do not warrant the activation of a Reception Centre or Shelter, there may be a need to open a Comfort Centre whereby Services provided may include shelter from the weather, nourishment, companionship or information. Major disaster situations, such as widespread floods, fires or large evacuation may require the opening of a Reception Centre or Shelter to provide a level of service above that offered at a Comfort Centre.

2.0 Scope

This Policy is applicable to all facilities within Kings County that are designated as a Comfort Centre/Emergency Shelter. The Regional Emergency Management Coordinator (REMC) will maintain and update the database of designated Comfort Centres/Emergency Shelters in Kings County.

3.0 References

- 3.1 Kings REMO Foundational Analysis – Comfort Centres and Emergency Shelters, September 2015
- 3.2 [Policy PRO-10-001 Municipality of the County of Kings](#)
Funding Community Emergency Preparedness Plans Policy, 2016-08-23
- 3.3 Kings County Inter-Municipal Services Agreement (Kings REMO), 2018-03-12



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- 3.4 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – Use of Facilities as a Comfort Centre or Emergency Shelter during an Emergency ([Annex A](#))

4.0 Definitions

- 4.1 **Comfort Centre** is a facility that is primarily used for residents who are remaining in their homes but do not have full services such as electricity, heat, and water. Comfort Centres can provide a place to go to get light meals, pick up small amounts of needed items and attend to personal hygiene matters. Comfort Centres do not provide overnight accommodations and will not accept evacuees. Comfort Centres are normally operated by volunteers in the municipality in which they are located. In order to operate as a Comfort Centre, the facility must have a generator.
- 4.2 **Emergency Shelters.** In large-scale emergencies, these types of facilities are opened and operated by the Red Cross, under the Department of Community Services, and include the provision of evacuees and personal services such as care of elderly, persons with disability, and can include psycho-social services. They are opened by the Red Cross at the request of Kings County via the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator.
- 4.3 **Kings County** includes the Municipality of the County of Kings, the Town of Berwick, the Town of Kentville, and the Town of Wolfville.

5.0 Assumptions

- 5.1 During a prolonged extreme weather event, the demand on the electrical grid may exceed capacity and could result in sporadic power outages and/or major grid failure. Icing may cause downed power lines and interruption of services. Either event could result in temperature extremes where comfort centres are needed.
- 5.2 Opening and operating a comfort centre will be either a Community Hall/Fire Department, or Kings REMO decision.
- 5.3 Responsibility for staffing, resources and liabilities will be that of the local jurisdiction.
- 5.4 Transportation to/from the facilities will be the citizen's responsibility or that of the local jurisdiction.
- 5.5 Occupants of comfort centres may need to transition to an emergency shelter if the situation dictates (i.e.: power outages or the inability for residents to remain in their homes safely).

6.0 Policy

- 6.1 During differing types and phases of an emergency incident, Kings County may need both Comfort Centres and Emergency Shelters.



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6.2 Volunteer Responsibilities

6.2.1 Each organization designated responsibility for operating a Comfort Centre/Emergency Shelter must be prepared to be operational within six (6) hours (Comfort Centre) / eight (8) hours (Emergency Shelter) of being requested to do so by Kings County REMO.

6.2.2 Each organization shall have a written emergency response plan that outlines individual responsibilities for the set up and continued operation during an incident.

6.3 County/Municipal Responsibilities

If Kings County REMO requests that the municipal facilities become operational as a comfort centre, reimbursement will be provided to the community for reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred during the emergency incident. These would include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- Food, beverage and related supplies;
- Generator fuel; and
- Hygienic supplies

6.4 Comfort Centres

6.4.1 Comfort Centres may provide different services depending on resources available. However, all comfort centres are intended to provide:

- A place to get warm;
- Electronic device charging capabilities;
- Washroom facilities;
- A warm drink;
- Check on each other, and share information; and
- Updates on weather and power resumption.

6.4.2 Some Comfort Centres may provide:

- Light snacks and/or food prepared by volunteers; and
- A space for community members to prepare their own food.

6.4.3 Comfort Centres are not overnight shelters.

6.4.4 Depending on the severity of the emergency and its impact on the telephone and cellular systems, it may be necessary to assign Amateur Radio operators to Emergency Shelters to provide communications with the County Emergency Coordination Centre. Deployment of Amateur Radio operators will be coordinated through Kings County REMO. Emergency Shelter managers are to ensure that the Amateur Radio operators have a private room or area for their equipment, with electrical power and easy access to the outside for antenna cables (e.g.: a window that can be opened)



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6.5 Procedure for Opening a Comfort Centre

- 6.5.1 The decision to open a Comfort Centre may be made by the community group responsible for the centre. The opening of a municipal Comfort Centre within Kings County shall be reported to Kings REMO.
- 6.5.2 In situations of widespread emergency or where Kings REMO has been made aware of utility disruptions in a community, REMO may contact the Comfort Centre contact person to discuss the activation of a centre. This discussion may be initiated by the area Councillor if they have been made aware of problems through contact with community residents.
- 6.5.3 Once the decision has been made to open a Comfort Centre, the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator will inform EMO NS, the Red Cross, and the Department of Community Services.
- 6.5.4 Comfort Centres are to be staffed with volunteers from within the community as prearranged by the community group responsible for the centre.
- 6.5.5 Once Kings REMO is made aware of Comfort Centre activation, Kings REMO will notify media sources to help publicize this service.
- 6.5.6 Comfort Centres are not intended for overnight shelter. If, during the daytime operations, the Comfort Centre's volunteers identify a requirement for overnight shelter, such requests shall be made to the Kings Regional Emergency Management Coordinator, at which time arrangements will be made to provide overnight shelter.
- 6.5.7 If long-term initiation of a Comfort Centre is required (more than 72 hours duration), or anticipated, Kings REMO may be required to provide resources to the centre as requested.
- 6.5.8 The decision to de-activate a Comfort Centre will be made by the community group responsible for the Comfort Centre. Kings Regional Emergency Management Coordinator will be notified of the intent to de-activate and will report the deactivation to EMO NS and to the media sources.

6.6 Procedure for Opening a Reception Centre/Emergency Shelter

- 6.6.1 The decision to open a Reception Centre/Emergency Shelter will be made by Kings REMO through consultation with emergency service partners and first responders. In most cases, a Reception Centre/Shelter is opened when evacuation of a large number of residents is required or anticipated.
- 6.6.2 In consultation with Emergency Service Partners and First Responders, Kings REMO will determine the facility location for the Reception Centre / Emergency Shelter as guided by the Kings Region Emergency Management Plan.



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- 6.6.3 Once the decision to open a Reception Centre/Emergency Shelter has been made, the Department of Community Services and Red Cross will be contacted by the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator (REMC), or designee, to initiate their response protocols. The setup and operation of the Reception Centre/Emergency Shelter will be the responsibility of the Red Cross.
- 6.6.4 Kings REMO will notify media sources of the Reception Centre/Emergency Shelter as appropriate.
- 6.6.5 The decision to de-activate a Reception Centre/Emergency Shelter will be made by Kings REMO in consultation with the Red Cross and other emergency service partners and first responders.

6.7 Communications

The opening of a Comfort Centre will be disseminated by the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator (REMC), or designee, through:

- Press Releases
- Local news media, commercial TV and radio
- Public Television/radio
- Local municipal websites
- Social Media (Facebook / Twitter)

Sample Script:

Kings County has opened a Comfort Centre at **Location Name**, located at **Address** in response to the **Type of Event** we are experiencing. The facility will be open from **hours of operation to/from** today. This is not an emergency shelter. Kings County will provide **insert support than can be expected by the county** at this facility. All minors must be accompanied by an adult. **Insert appropriate protective measures winter or summer and instructions for obtaining assistance if needed.**

6.8 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every year from effective/amended date.

Erin Beaudin

CAO

2018-09-18

Date



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Annex A

Memorandum of Understanding Use of Facilities as a Comfort Centre or Emergency Shelter during an Emergency

Between

**Kings County Regional Emergency Management Organization
Herein referred to as "Kings REMO"**

And

**The [Name of Facility]
Herein referred to as the "Facility Owner"**

WHEREAS the Kings REMO desires to enter into an agreement with the Facility Owner for the use of their facility as a Comfort Centre or Emergency Shelter during a loss of infrastructure caused by severe weather, a catastrophic event, or a declared State of Local Emergency.

WHEREAS this MOU does not limit the xxxx Fire Hall or Community Centre from activating their facility as a Comfort Centre on their own initiative, if such an activation takes place, the Facility Owner agrees to inform Kings REMO of the Comfort Centre activation. There will not be any reimbursement of costs by Kings REMO to the Facility Owner if the facility is opened under the initiative of the Facility Owner.

DEFINITIONS:

1. A Comfort Centre is a building owned and operated by a community group or fire department with the appropriate infrastructure to provide local residents a short stay during a power outage for warmth, a warm drink, possibly a sandwich and soup, access washrooms, recharges small electronic devices, receive information respecting the emergency. These facilities are not overnight facilities with operation typically between 8:00am and 8:00pm subject to the availability of volunteers. In the absence of local volunteers, the Kings REMO shall request the Canadian Red Cross for their volunteers to operate the facility.
2. An Emergency Shelter is a building owned by a community group or fire department but operated by the Canadian Red Cross during an emergency. These facilities shall have adequate power generation, kitchen, washroom, and sleeping space for those larger scale emergencies when the need to evacuate a building or geographic area exceeds the 10 unit/homes or 25-person threshold for a prolonged period of time operating continuously, day and night, until the emergency is terminated.

AGREEMENT:

1. The parties agree when this facility is opened as a Comfort Centre at the request of the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator for Kings REMO, the Kings REMO and the Facility Owner will determine if their volunteers or the Red Cross volunteers will staff the facility to provide for the needs of those seeking relief. Reimbursement of costs and expenses paid by the Facility Owner meaning; building costs, power, water, sewer charges, clean-up, including food and



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warm drinks if provided by the Facility Owner, will be reimbursed only if the Facility Owner is directed to open by Kings REMO.

2. The parties further agree this facility is opened as an Emergency Shelter at the request of the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator (REMC) for Kings REMO, following consultation with the NS Department of Community Services, the Red Cross, and EMO Nova Scotia. Kings REMO will contact these agencies to staff the shelter and provide for the needs of persons evacuated to the Shelter, meaning food, blankets, beds, personal care items, registration. The facility shall operate without interruption until notified by Kings REMO to terminate activities. Reimbursement of costs and expenses paid by the Facility Owner meaning building costs; power, water, sewer charges, will be reimbursed if the Facility Owner is directed to open by Kings REMO.
3. The Facility Owner agrees to open their facility within six (6) hours notification for a Comfort Shelter or eight (8) hours notification for an Emergency Shelter by the Regional Emergency Management Coordinator for Kings REMO.
4. Kings REMO shall advertise the location of Comfort Centres and Emergency Shelters for use by any resident or persons in need without regard to their place of residence.
5. Any facility on a well shall meet safe drinking water guidelines at the time of opening to the public. To ensure water quality, the Facility Owner shall submit test samples of its water supply annually to a health authority for clearance as a safe source of potable water.
6. Any facility dependent on a septic system shall ensure the system is fully operational, able to meet the capacity needs of the facility for extended periods.
7. The Facility Owner shall submit their claims for costs and expenses to Kings REMO within thirty (30) days of ceasing activities.

WITNESS WHEREOF: This Memorandum of Understanding executed by Kings REMO and Facility Owner, made this:

_____ Day of _____ 20xx

Witness

Kings REMO

Witness

[Name of Facility]