



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

Review of Extreme Cold Alert Temperature Threshold

Date:	January 7, 2014
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	General Manager, Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

COMMENTS

At the meeting held December 16, 17 and 18, 2013 City Council requested the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, in consultation with the Medical Officer of Health and the Director, Office of Emergency Management to review the temperature thresholds for issuing an Extreme Cold Alert and whether any changes to the protocol are required and to report to the January 21, 2014 meeting of Community Development Recreation Committee.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD25.10>

The City of Toronto issues an Extreme Cold Weather Alert when there is increased danger to homeless people from extreme cold weather or extreme winter weather conditions. It is usually called in the morning when Environment Canada takes any of these actions:

- Predicts a coming overnight temperature of minus 15 degrees or lower without wind chill;
- Issues a wind chill warning for outdoor activity for people in the Toronto area;
- Predicts extreme weather conditions such as a blizzard, ice storm or sudden drops in temperature.

The Extreme Cold Weather Alert system was first implemented in Toronto during the winter of 1996/97, and arose from a June 1996 report of the Homeless Emergency Action Task Force to respond to the increased number of homeless people who need services. The strategy was developed in consultation with social service agencies, volunteers, homeless people and government representatives.

The City of Toronto established minus 15 degrees as the temperature threshold to call an Extreme Cold Weather Alert after a review of the weather conditions that preceded the deaths of three homeless people in 1995, average minimum winter temperatures in Toronto, and of severe winter weather conditions between 1992 and 1996.

The minus 15 temperature threshold has not been reviewed since 1996. Staff in SSHA will work with the Medical Officer of Health to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of the current business process of issuing an Extreme Cold Weather Alert, including the temperature threshold, and will report to the June 25, 2014 meeting of CDRC on any recommended changes. The review will include an examination of any recent evidence in medical literature about links between cold weather and health risks, and the extreme cold weather protocols in place in other jurisdictions and their rationales.

SIGNATURE

Phillip Abrahams
General Manager
Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
416-392-7885 pabraham@toronto.ca