

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF
ANTIGONISH

TOPIC:	Comfort Centre & Emergency Shelter Policy
POLICY NUMBER:	39
DATE APPROVED:	April 17, 2012 (#2012-34)
DATE REVISED:	May 11, 2021 (#2021-062)

1.0 TITLE:

1.1 This policy may be cited as the “Comfort Centre & Emergency Shelter Policy” of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish.

2.0 PURPOSE:

2.1 This policy outlines an overview of procedures and responsibilities regarding the activation of Comfort Centres & Emergency Shelters.

2.2 This policy aims to ensure residents have adequate access to temporary sheltering following an emergency by developing a partnership with community organizations to open facilities.

3.0 SCOPE:

3.1 This policy is applicable to identified Comfort Centres & Emergency Shelters within the Municipality of the County of Antigonish as officially designated by the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization.

4.0 DEFINITIONS:

4.1 *Comfort Centre* – a facility operated by a community organization that is opened to provide a location where community members can gather for a period of time during the day to access limited services. Depending on the time of year and the nature of the emergency, a Comfort Centre can serve several purposes including providing relief from extreme temperatures, provision of light nourishment, information gathering, and charging personal devices. A Comfort Centre is not opened with the intention of turning into an overnight shelter operation.

4.2 *Emergency Shelter* – in large-scale and severe emergencies, these types of operations are opened and operated by the Canadian Red Cross, under the Department of Community Services to provide safe, temporary lodging to those affected by an emergency. Services can include overnight accommodations, feeding, personal services, psycho-social support, and other emergency social services depending on the nature of the emergency.

5.0 ACTIVATION CRITERIA/GUIDELINES

5.1 To open as a Comfort Centre, the following criteria is recommended:

- A localized or widespread power outage has occurred
- The impacted community may benefit from a temporary place of shelter with relief from extreme temperatures, provision of light nourishment, or to gather information

- There is a need being communicated by multiple residents in the impacted community
- The activation is expected to be short-term (under 72 hours)

5.2 To open as an Emergency Shelter, it is recommended to have met the criteria to open as a Comfort Centre in addition to the following criteria:

- Temporary overnight shelter is needed as a result of a substantial emergency
- A community evacuation may be a possibility or have already occurred
- There is an identified need for personal care or psycho-social services
- The activation is expected to be long-term (over 72 hours)

6.0 PROCEDURE FOR OPENING A COMFORT CENTRE:

- 6.1 The decision to open a Comfort Centre is made by the community organization in consultation with the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization.
- 6.2 In situations of widespread emergency or utility disruptions in a community, the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization may contact the Comfort Centre contact person to discuss the activation of a centre.
- 6.3 Comfort Centres are to be staffed with volunteers as prearranged by the community organization responsible for the facility.
- 6.4 Comfort Centres are not intended for overnight shelter. If Comfort Centre volunteers identify a need for overnight shelter, a request to transition into an Emergency Shelter will be made to the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization.
- 6.5 If extended operations of a Comfort Centre are required or anticipated, the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization may provide resources to the centre as requested.
- 6.6 The decision to deactivate a Comfort Centre will be made by the community organization responsible for the Comfort Centre in consultation with the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization.

7.0 PROCEDURE FOR OPENING AN EMERGENCY SHELTER:

- 7.1 The decision to open an Emergency Shelter is made by the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization in consultation with the Canadian Red Cross and other emergency services partners and first responders.
- 7.2 The facility location for the Emergency Shelter will be guided by the Emergency Plan and determined by the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization in consultation with the Canadian Red Cross and other emergency services partners and first responders.
- 7.3 Once the decision to open an Emergency Shelter has been made, the Canadian Red Cross and the Department of Community Services will be contacted to initiate their response protocols. The set-up and operation of the Emergency Shelter will be the responsibility of the Canadian Red Cross.

7.4 The decision to deactivate an Emergency Shelter will be made by the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization in consultation with the Canadian Red Cross and other emergency services partners and first responders.

8.0 COMMUNICATIONS:

8.1 Ensuring public notification for the opening and deactivation of Comfort Centres & Emergency Shelters will be the responsibility of the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization with support from the involved community organization.

8.2 Where possible, public notification for the opening and deactivation of Comfort Centres & Emergency Shelters will be made through press releases, local news media outlets, television, radio, local municipal websites, and social media as appropriate.

8.3 Sample script for a Comfort Centre & Emergency Shelter activation:

*A Comfort Centre/Emergency Shelter has been opened at **[location/facility name]** located at **[civic address]**. The facility will be open from **[hours of operation]**. **[List of available services provided]** will be available.*

*Further questions regarding this Comfort Centre/Emergency Shelter can be directed to **[phone number of contact at the Comfort Centre/Emergency Shelter]**.*

9.0 POLICY DISTRIBUTION AND MAINTENANCE:

9.1 A copy of this policy will be distributed to all Comfort Centre & Emergency Shelter contacts along with information on how to contact the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization upon activation and deactivation.

9.2 A copy of this policy will be distributed to all Councillors along with the contact information for Comfort Centre & Emergency Shelter contacts in their district.

9.3 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization.

9.4 The contact information for designated Comfort Centres & Emergency Shelters will be reviewed annually by the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization.