

1. Purpose

- 1.1 During disasters and emergencies, residents should be prepared to provide for themselves for at least 72 hours. However, communities come together in times of need to assist individuals in their region. Locations such as schools, fire halls, and community halls/centers may open their doors to residents to provide for some of their basic needs during disasters and emergencies. Such support enhances the [72-Hour Preparedness Guide](#) and efforts suggested for all Nova Scotians.
- 1.2 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. It is an overview of procedures and responsibilities regarding the activation of Municipal Comfort Centers & Emergency Shelters and outlines potential funding to registered facilities to ensure there is adequate facility coverage throughout the municipality in the event of an activation.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to registered Comfort Centers within the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's as officially designated by the Municipality upon review of **Form MCCP01-Municipal Comfort Center Registration Form**. The Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) will maintain and update the database of designated Comfort Centers annually.

3. Definitions

Comfort Center – 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 Center can serve several purposes including providing relief from extreme temperatures, provision of light nourishment, information gathering, and charging personal devices. A Comfort Center is **not opened** with the intention of turning into an overnight shelter operation.

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.

Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC)- the municipal employee that is appointed as the Emergency Management Coordinator.

4. Registration Process

4.1 A facility may express interest in becoming a municipal comfort center to the St. Mary's EMC, who will ask that the facility fill out **Form MCCP01-Municipal Comfort Center Registration Form** to be considered.

4.2 The EMC will review the application and, in coordination with the Municipal Building Inspector, perform a site visit of the facility to ensure the safety and comfort of people using the space as a Municipal Comfort Center. The EMC will record on the application and consider the following criteria during the site visit:

- Alternative Power- generator availability during a power outage.
- Physical Location Safety- central location, adequate parking, away from potential hazards.
- Building and Grounds- barrier-free and wheelchair accessible.
- Building Heating/Air Conditioning
- Electrical- adequate power outlets to allow visitors to charge devices.
- A first aid kit and an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) are on site.
- Seating/Tables- adequate number for expected visitors and facility personnel.
- Outdoor Space- adequate space in the event of telecommunication outages for a portable communications hub (provided by the Province, if available).
- Drinking Water- Any facility on a well shall meet safe drinking water guidelines at the time of opening to the public. To ensure safe water quality, the Facility Owner shall submit test samples of its water supply annually to a health authority for clearance.
- Sewer System- adequate number of bathroom facilities for expected visitors.
- Evacuation Plan

4.3 Once the facility is deemed safe and adequate to open as a Municipal Comfort Center, the application shall be submitted to Council for a recommendation of approval at the next regular Committee of the Whole Meeting. If approved the facility will be notified in writing of their successful application.

4.4 As a registered comfort center, operational training can be provided to the facility in conjunction with the Municipality and the NS Emergency Management Office (dates and times subject to availability).

5. Activation Criteria/Guidelines

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

- a. A localized or widespread power outage has occurred.
- b. The impacted community may benefit from a temporary place of shelter with relief from extreme temperatures, provision of light nourishment, or gathering information.
- c. There is a need being communicated by multiple residents in the impacted community.
- d. 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 Center in addition to the following criteria:

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

6. Procedure for Opening a Comfort Center

6.1 The decision to open a municipal Comfort Center is made by the community organization in consultation with the municipal Emergency Management Coordinator.

6.2 In situations of widespread emergency or utility disruptions in a community, the Municipality may contact the Comfort Center contact person to discuss the activation of a center.

6.3 Comfort Centers are to be staffed with volunteers as prearranged by the community organization responsible for the facility.

6.4 A Comfort Center is not opened when RCMP or Transportation Authority is requesting residents stay off the roads.

6.5 Food, if any is provided, is made in a commercial kitchen using safe food handling practices or offers only pre-packaged food.

6.6 Comfort Centers are not intended for overnight shelter. If Comfort Centers identify a need for overnight shelter, a request to convert into an Emergency Shelter will be made to the Municipality.

6.7 If extended operations of a Comfort Center are required or anticipated, the Municipality may provide resources to the center as requested.

6.8 The decision to deactivate a Comfort Center will be made by the community organization responsible for the Comfort Center in consultation with the Municipality.

7. Procedure for Opening an Emergency Shelter

- 7.1 The decision to open an Emergency Shelter is made by the Municipality 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 municipal Emergency Management Plan and determined by the Municipality 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 Municipality in consultation with the Canadian Red Cross and other emergency services partners and first responders.

8. Communications

- 8.1 Ensuring public notification for the opening and deactivation of Comfort Centers & Emergency Shelters will be the responsibility of the Municipality with support from the involved community organization.
- 8.2 Where possible, public notification for the opening and deactivation of Comfort Centers & Emergency Shelters will be made by the Municipality through press releases, local news media outlets, radio, the municipal Voyent Alert System, local municipal websites, and social media as appropriate. Below is a sample script for a Comfort Center & Emergency Shelter activation:

A Comfort Center/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 Center/Emergency Shelter can be directed to [phone number of contact at the Comfort Center/Emergency Shelter].

9. Eligibility for Comfort Center Funding

- 9.1 In order to be eligible for consideration for funding under this policy, an organization shall be a:
 - a. Fire Department registered with the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's and registered under the Registry of Joint Stocks; or
 - b. Community Hall or similar facility registered under the Registry of Joint Stocks.

10. Financial Contribution

- 10.1 After successful registration as a municipal Comfort Center, the organization will be eligible for an annual grant of \$250 to subsidize the cost of expenses to operate during an event (water, toiletries, non-perishables etc.). No reporting on behalf of the organization will be necessary for the release of funds.
- 10.2 The Municipality shall consider requests for the following purposes from facilities deemed adequate for use as a Comfort Center and/or Emergency Shelter:
- a. Electrical work to enable connection to a generator;
 - b. Acquisition of a generator of a suitable size to offer basic services to the facility;
 - c. Funding for major repairs; or
 - d. Construction of a building of adequate size to house a generator and related supplies (i.e., fuel).
- 10.3 All equipment purchased with funding provided under this policy shall be the property of the organization applying for funding.
- 10.4 The Municipality may provide funding for the above, net of any funds received from other programs to a facility registered for use as a Comfort Center and/or Emergency Shelter.
- 10.5 Applications for funding will be considered by Council during the yearly budgetary process (January-March) for upcoming projects. However, the Municipality recognizes that due to emergencies or unplanned damages, funding may need to be considered at various times throughout the year for registered comfort centers.

11. Funding Submission

- 11.1 All requests for funding should be made using **Form MCCP02- Registered Comfort Center Application for Funding**, where possible, in advance of any work being started or any expenses being incurred and shall include:
- a. List of key contacts for the organization;
 - b. Most recent Annual Financial Statement;
 - c. Current Year to Date Income Statement;
 - d. Scope and budget for the work to be undertaken and/or the equipment to be acquired along with quotations.

12. Funding Criteria

- 12.1 In reviewing applications for funding to equip a facility as a Comfort Center and/or Emergency Shelter, the factors taken into consideration shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
- a. Geographic location of the building and number of road access points to the facility;
 - b. Availability of other equipped facilities in the near vicinity;
 - c. Accessibility of the building;
 - d. Availability of kitchen facilities and potable water;
 - e. Natural or other hazards in near proximity of the building (i.e. flooding hazards, etc.);
 - f. Operational capacity and commitment of the organization responsible for the facility;
 - g. Efforts of the organization that have been put into organizing themselves for this purpose including the establishment of a special purpose committee, fundraising, etc.

13. Funding Priorities

- 13.1 As a general principle, priority for funding will be given to ensuring that sufficient facilities throughout the Municipality are capable of being connected to a generator provided either by the Municipality or through EMO Nova Scotia.
- 13.2 Priority would then be given to assisting organizations in acquiring generators for their own use.
- 13.3 The Municipality may choose, in their sole discretion, to fund other priorities as they become apparent or necessary.
- 13.4 Each facility shall be required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding Agreement between the Municipality and the facility.

14. Policy Revisions

- 14.1 A copy of this policy will be distributed to all registered Comfort Center & Emergency Shelter contacts along with information on how to contact the Municipality upon activation and deactivation.
- 14.2 A copy of this policy will be distributed to all Councillors along with the contact information for Comfort Center & Emergency Shelter contacts in their district.
- 14.3 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Municipality.
- 14.4 The contact information for designated Comfort Centers & Emergency Shelters will be reviewed annually by the Municipality.



Mallory Fraser
Municipal Clerk

June 12, 2023
Date of Approval



SCHEDULE A

POLICY RECORD

The Municipality shall ensure this policy is reviewed at least once every four years or as requested by Council and, where necessary revised upon approval of Council.

Date of Review	Section(s) Updated	Council Approval Date
	Adoption of Policy	June 12, 2023



FORM MCCP01

MUNICIPAL COMFORT CENTER REGISTRATION FORM

General Information		
Name of Facility		Civic Address of Facility
Registry of Joint Stocks Active #		Mailing Address of Facility (If different)
Contact Person 1	Daytime Phone	Email
Contact Person 2	Phone	Email
Contact Person 3	Phone	Email
After Hours Procedure to Open Facility		
Type of Facility:		
Comfort Center (<i>no overnight accommodations</i>) _____ Emergency Shelter _____		
Services that could be offered at a Comfort Center:		
<input type="checkbox"/> A place to get warm/cool	<input type="checkbox"/> Light refreshments	<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-packaged food
<input type="checkbox"/> Charge electronic devices	<input type="checkbox"/> Tea/coffee	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepared food (<i>trained volunteers</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/> Washroom facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Potable or Bottled Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<input type="checkbox"/> Share information/updates	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet Access	
Location of Emergency First Aid Kit?		Location of Automated External Defibrillator (AED)?
Physical Information		
Wheelchair Accessible		Washrooms Accessible
Yes No	Yes No	Elevators, chair lift, etc.?
Male _____ Female _____ Unisex _____		Yes No
Number of Washrooms?		Number of Showers?
Male _____ Female _____ Unisex _____		Male _____ Female _____ Unisex _____
Physical Dimensions, Approx. Square Footage		Is there a room for the comfort of animals (pets)?
		Yes No
Water Source	If Well	Date Well Last Tested
Municipal ___ Well (GPM) _____	Potable Non-Potable	
Wastewater		Is the facility alarmed?
Municipal Sewer Septic	Yes No	Is there an Emergency Evacuation Plan?
	Yes No	Yes No



Kitchen Facilities							
Number of Fridges		Number of Freezers		Number of Stoves		Number of BBQs	
Gas	Electric	Gas	Electric	Gas	Electric	Gas	Electric
# of Tables		# of Chairs		Number of Sinks			
Overall Kitchen Rating				Date of Health Inspection?			
Less than Residential		Residential		More than Residential			
Other Information Regarding the Kitchen							
Electrical							
Type/size of electrical panel (amp)			Number of 110V outlets		Circuit Breakers or Fuses?		
200	400	600					
Generator	Type			Generator Testing			
Yes No	Fixed	Manual Transfer Switch		Frequency:			
	Portable	Automatic Transfer Switch		Last Tested:			
Generator Capacity				Generator Make, Model, Size:			
Full Building _____ Limited _____							
Miscellaneous							
Primary Heating Source		Electric	Propane	Natural Gas	Oil	Other	
Times the Comfort Center may be open if required during a long-term power outage				Any Hazardous Materials stored onsite (propane, glycol, etc.). If yes, explain.			
Are there any volunteers available and ready to assist should the Comfort Center be required on short notice?				All applicants must confirm they have read and reviewed the Municipal Comfort Center Policy			
Yes		No		Yes		No	
Date Completed				Completed by (please print)			

OFFICE USE ONLY

EMC/Building Inspector Notes



FORM M CCP02

REGISTERED COMFORT CENTER APPLICATION FOR FUNDING

General Information		
Name of Facility		Civic Address of Facility
Registry of Joint Stocks Active #		Mailing Address of Facility (If different)
Contact Person 1	Daytime Phone	Email
Contact Person 2	Phone	Email
Name of Applicant	Signature	Date Submitted
Funding/Project Information		
Type of Project under Section 10.2 of Policy		Amount Requested
<input type="checkbox"/> Electrical work to enable connection to a generator. <input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition of a generator of a suitable size to offer basic services to the facility. <input type="checkbox"/> Funding for major repairs. <input type="checkbox"/> Construction of a building, not to exceed 24 square metres, to house a generator and related supplies.		\$ _____
Project Description & Scope		
Financial Information		
Please indicate required documents attached:		
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Most recent Annual Financial Statement. Current Year to Date Income Statement. Scope and budget for the work to be undertaken and/or the equipment to be acquired. Quotations for work.	

FORM MCCP03

REGISTERED COMFORT CENTER MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Use of Facilities as a Comfort Center during an Emergency

Between

[Name of Facility]

Herein referred to as the "Facility Owner"

And

Municipality of the District of St. Mary's Emergency Management Organization

Herein referred to as "St. Mary's EMO"

The Facility Owner desires to enter into an agreement with St. Mary's EMO to provide its facility as a Comfort Center during a loss of infrastructure caused by severe weather, an emergency event, or a declared State of Local Emergency.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) does not limit the facility from activating its facility as a Comfort Center on its own initiative under the liability of the organization. If such an activation takes place, the Facility Owner agrees to inform St. Mary's EMO of the Comfort Center activation.

DEFINITIONS:

Comfort Center is a facility that is used for residents who are Sheltering-In-Place and remain in their homes during an emergency but do not have full services such as electricity, heat, and water. Comfort Centers are intended to provide: a place to go to get warm/cool; light refreshments; charge electronic devices; provide updates; community gathering points; and washroom facilities. To operate as a Comfort Center, the facility must have a generator.

Comfort Centers do not provide overnight accommodations and will not accept evacuees. If, during the daytime operations, the Comfort Center volunteers identify a requirement for overnight shelter, such requests shall be forwarded to the St. Mary's Emergency Management Organization, at which time a decision will be made to provide overnight shelter (see Emergency Shelters definition).

Emergency Shelter is a facility opened at the request of the St. Mary's Emergency Management Organization in a large-scale emergency and is operated by the Canadian Red Cross, under the direction of the Department of Community Services. An Emergency Shelter includes providing personal services, and accommodation and can include psycho-social services. To operate as an emergency shelter, the facility must have a generator; running water available during power outages; a kitchen facility; showers; and a large space for cots to be set up. Shelters are usually managed by the NS Department of Community Services in conjunction with the Red Cross.

AGREEMENT:

1. The parties agree that when this facility is opened as a Comfort Center, the facility's volunteers are responsible for the care and upkeep of the facility. The attached guidelines, Appendix B- Comfort Center Facility Guidelines, provide guidance to the offerings of a Comfort Center.
2. Following the international standard for emergency preparedness, it is recommended residents prepare personal preparedness kits for their family and pets to Shelter in Place for up to 72 hours. It is further recommended Comfort Centers open after 72 hours have passed. In extenuating circumstances, consideration may be made to open a Comfort Center prior to 72 hours.
3. The parties further agree this facility will not be used as an overnight Emergency Shelter unless there is a need for an overnight Emergency Shelter and the request is first made to the St. Mary's EMO for consultation with NS EMO, Department of Community Services, and the Canadian Red Cross.
4. St. Mary's EMO shall advertise the location of Comfort Centers for use by any resident or persons in need without regard to their place of residence. Advertising can only be completed once opening time and closing time are provided to St. Mary's EMO. Where possible, the ideal open hours for a comfort center are 10 am – 2 pm or 4 pm – 8 pm.
5. Any facility utilizing a well shall meet safe drinking water guidelines at the time of opening to the public. To ensure safe 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 offering food shall be made in a commercial kitchen using safe food handling practices, or only offer pre-packaged food.
7. Any facility dependent on a septic system shall ensure the system is fully operational and able to meet the capacity needs of the facility for extended periods.
8. Comfort Centers will be eligible for an annual grant as per the Municipal Comfort Center Policy and may make requests to Council for additional Comfort Center Funding considerations. If a Comfort Center receives funding for equipment or infrastructure, it is the duty of the Comfort Center to maintain the equipment or infrastructure and keep it in good repair.
9. If a Community Center opens a Comfort Center on its own accord, against advice from the EMC, the Comfort Center shall assume all liability.
10. A Comfort Center shall remain a Municipally Registered Comfort Center unless they have provided 90 days notice to de-register.



WITNESS WHEREOF: This Memorandum of Understanding executed by the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's EMO and the Facility Owner, made this: _____ day of _____, 20____.

Witness

St. Mary's EMO Representative

Witness

Facility Owner / Representative