

Lunenburg County Regional Emergency Management Organization Comfort Centres

Effective Date: 2021-01-18	Supersedes: All Previous Procedures
Presented to REMO Advisory Council: 2020-01-20	Approved by REMO Advisory Council: January 18, 2021

1.0 Definitions

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

Comfort Centres do not provide overnight accommodations and will not accept evacuees.

Emergency Shelter is a facility opened at the request of the Lunenburg County Regional Emergency Management Organization in a large-scale emergency and is operated by the Canadian Red Cross (CRC), under the direction of Department of Community Services. An Emergency Shelter includes providing personal services, accommodation and can include psycho-social services including mental health supports. They are typically opened for evacuations or emergencies involving substantial damage that make it unsafe for people to remain in their homes. Shelters follow all provincial public health guidelines, and the CRC trains volunteers that support emergency shelters. To operate as an emergency shelter, the facility must have: a generator; running water available during power outages; kitchen facility; showers; and a large space for cots to be set up.

2.0 Scope

The Risk Analysis (2015) for Lunenburg County reveals the highest risks (probability and impact) are weather-related incidents. A secondary risk associated with such incidents is power outages.

Historical evidence and predictive science suggest weather related events are likely to occur with increasing frequency. Risk tolerance within Lunenburg County to weather-related events is decreased significantly when the impacts include power outages. Efforts to increase individual and community preparedness by having a 72-hour personal preparedness kit for families and pets may increase risk tolerance.

Municipalities within the REMO receive their power supply, delivery or restoration from a variety of sources. Supply is managed by Nova Scotia Power (NSP), a private corporation. Nova Scotia Power, the Town of Lunenburg, the Town of Mahone Bay, and Riverport Electric operate electrical utilities to deliver power to residents and businesses. Restoration is facilitated by Nova Scotia Power and the Town of Mahone Bay, and Riverport Electric.

3.0 Becoming and Opening a Comfort Centre

A Comfort Centre will be at a community gather point such as community centre, fire hall, school, or church.

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

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 provide communications with the Lunenburg County Emergency Coordination Centre. Deployment of Amateur Radio operators can be requested through Lunenburg County REMO. Space requirements 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).

To become a recognized Comfort Centre in Lunenburg County:

- A facility or group can express their interest to the Lunenburg County REMO.
- A designate will visit the facility to complete a Facility Profile of the facility as well as obtain three contacts for the facility.
- Staffing, resources, and liabilities will be the responsibility of the Comfort Centre.
- A Memorandum of Understanding will be completed for the group or facility operating a Comfort Centre.
- The Comfort Centre will be entered into a database and shared on the REMO website for residents to learn where their nearest facility is. Residents can then add the locations into their personal preparedness kit.

3.1 Procedure for Opening a Comfort Centre

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

- A place to get warm;
 - Electronic device charging capabilities;
 - Washroom facilities;
 - Light refreshments;
 - Check on each other, and share information; and
 - Updates on weather and power resumption.
- i. Comfort Centres are not overnight shelters.
 - ii. 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 Centres open after 72 hours have passed. In extenuating circumstances, there may be a need to open a Comfort Centre prior to 72 hours.
 - iii. The decision to open a Comfort Centre can be made by the community group responsible for the centre.
 - iv. In the event of a localized emergency, Lunenburg County REMO may ask a Comfort Centre to open for a period of time, to assist the local residents.
 - v. Comfort Centres are to be staffed by volunteers from within the community as prearranged by the community group responsible for the Comfort Centre.
 - vi. Once the decision has been made to open a Comfort Centre, the Comfort Centre contacts REMO by calling (902) 930-1085 or emailing emo@modl.ca with its opening and closing times, and information will be shared with residents, NS EMO, media, etc.
 - vii. Comfort Centres are not intended for overnight shelter. If, during the daytime operations, the Comfort Centre volunteers identify a requirement for overnight shelter, requests shall be made to REMO, at which time arrangements will be made to provide overnight shelter. REMO can be contacted by calling (902) 930-1085 or emailing emo@modl.ca.
 - viii. The decision to deactivate a Comfort Centre can be made by the community group responsible for the Comfort Centre, in consultation with REMO. Once the decision is made to deactivate a comfort centre, the Comfort Centre contacts REMO by calling (902) 930-1085 or emailing emo@modl.ca and the information will be shared with residents, NS EMO, media, etc.

4.0 COVID-19 Guidelines

The guidelines below are intended to inform the general operation of comfort centres if COVID-19 or other public health issue is occurring. Additional steps are required to ensure comfort centre operations comply with Public Health Orders.

For the most up-to-date information, please visit www.novascotia.ca/coronavirus paying attention to direction including:

- No entry for anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or who must self-isolate
- The requirement for wearing masks in all public spaces
- Social distancing of at least 2 meters (6 feet)
- Hand washing / hand sanitizing
- Cleaning of surfaces

5.0 Communications

Lunenburg County REMO may track community Comfort Centre facilities as part of situational awareness during emergency events in order to notify residents and Councillors of the situation. REMO will maintain lists of approved facilities for reporting purposes to NS EMO, media, 211, Nova Scotia Power or other Emergency Support Partners. Comfort Centres are required to report their opening and closing times and services to REMO by calling (902) 930-1085 or emailing emo@modl.ca.

Dan McDougall, CAO
Municipality of the District of Chester

Date: _____

Alex Dumaresq, Deputy CAO
Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

Date: _____

Tammy Crowder, CAO
Town of Bridgewater

Date: _____

Bea Renton, CAO
Town of Lunenburg

Date: _____

Dylan Heide, CAO
Town of Mahone Bay

Date: _____

COMFORT CENTRE FACILITY GUIDELINES

The priority is to ensure the safety and comfort of people using the Comfort Centre. Steps to become an approved Comfort Centre and be posted on the REMO website for residents:

- A facility expresses interest to the Lunenburg County REMO.
- A Facility Profile, including three contacts, is completed (reviewed annually).
- A Memorandum of Understanding is signed by the Facility Owner and REMO.
- The Comfort Centre determines its opening and closing times and relays the information to REMO by calling (902) 930-1085 or emailing emo@modl.ca for advertising to residents and sharing with media.

The following criteria for comfort centres locations should be considered.

- 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 Centres open after 72 hours have passed. In extenuating circumstances, there may be a need to open a Comfort Centre prior to 72 hours.
- There is a generator on site for alternate power.
- Physical location is safe and is in a central location, with adequate parking, away from potential hazards.
- The Centre is not opened when RCMP or Transportation Authority is requesting residents stay off the roads.
- Building and grounds are barrier-free and wheelchair accessible.
- 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 to a health authority for clearance as a safe source of potable water.
- Food, if any is provided, is made in a commercial kitchen using safe food handling practices or offer only pre-packaged food.
- The building has heating and where possible, air conditioning.
- There are adequate power outlets to allow visitors to charge devices.
- A first aid kit and an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) are on site.
- There is enough available seating for the number of expected visitors, as well as facility personnel.
- There is adequate space outside the property in the event of telecommunication outages for a portable communications hub (provided by the Province, if available). Requests to be made to REMO if required.
- Adequate staff/volunteers are available for at least the first 24 hours.
- The Comfort Centre determines its opening and closing times and relays the information to REMO by calling (902) 930-1085 or emailing emo@modl.ca for advertising to residents and sharing with media.

Comfort Centre Response Plan Activation Checklist

Before opening:

- Advise REMO the Centre's opening and closing times by calling (902) 930-1085 or emailing emo@modl.ca so info can be shared with media and residents.
- Volunteers to report to the location at least one hour before it is scheduled to open.
- Turn on the heat/air conditioning and other necessary equipment.
- Set up chairs and post signage, if required.
- Prepare any refreshments (tea, coffee, etc.) that will be offered.
- Check the washrooms to ensure they are clean and have an adequate supply of soap, toilet paper, and paper towels.

After opening:

- Advise the Regional Emergency Management Organization that the centre is open by calling (902) 930-1085 or emailing emo@modl.ca.
- Re-stock supplies as required.
- Post closing times in a visible location for residents.
- Support the Comfort Centre Manager in providing reports to REMO.
- Advise Manager if you need to leave so your position can be filled.
- Advise the Manager of any security concerns.

Daily closing:

- Advise visitors that the centre will be closing at least 15 minutes in advance.
- Once the doors are closed and locked, check the facilities, clean them and replenish supplies as required.
- Ensure all equipment has been turned off or unplugged and that the heat/air conditioning is set to the appropriate level for overnight.
- If possible, leave together and be mindful of personal safety when returning to your vehicle or home.

Deactivation:

- The Manager will lead the deactivation process, supported by volunteers.
- Check the facilities, clean and replenish supplies as required.
- Clean up as required and place garbage, compost, and recycling in the appropriate places.
- Ensure all equipment has been turned off or unplugged and that the heat/air conditioning is re-set to the appropriate level.
- The Manager will host a debrief and all volunteers should participate in an after-action report.
- Tell your Manager if you need Critical Incident Stress Management.

ACTIVATION TRIGGERS

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 Centres open after 72 hours have passed. In extenuating circumstances, there may be a need to open a Comfort Centre prior to 72 hours.

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

Between

**[Name of Facility]
Herein referred to as the “Facility Owner”**

And

**Lunenburg County Regional Emergency Management Organization
Herein referred to as “Lunenburg County REMO”**

The Facility Owner desires to enter into an agreement with Lunenburg County REMO to provide its facility as a Comfort Centre 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 _____ {Fire Hall or Community Centre or Church Group} from activating their facility as a Comfort Centre on their own initiative. If such an activation takes place, the Facility Owner agrees to inform Lunenburg County REMO of the Comfort Centre activation.

DEFINITIONS:

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

Comfort Centres do not provide overnight accommodations and will not accept evacuees.

Emergency Shelter is a facility opened at the request of the Lunenburg County Regional Emergency Management Organization in a large-scale emergency and is operated by the Canadian Red Cross, under the direction of Department of Community Services. An Emergency Shelter includes providing personal services, 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; kitchen facility; showers; and a large space for cots to be set up.

AGREEMENT:

1. The parties agree when this facility is opened as a Comfort Centre, the facility's volunteers are responsible for the care and upkeep of the facility. The attached Guidelines provide guidance as to the offerings of a Comfort Centre.
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 Centres open after 72 hours have passed. In extenuating circumstances, there may be a need to open a Comfort Centre prior to 72 hours.
3. The parties further agree this facility will not be used as an overnight Emergency Shelter. If an overnight Emergency Shelter is required, the request will be made to the Lunenburg County REMO for consultation with NS EMO, Department of Community Services, and the Canadian Red Cross.
4. Lunenburg County REMO shall advertise the location of Comfort Centres 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 Lunenburg REMO.
5. 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 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, able to meet the capacity needs of the facility for extended periods.

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

_____ day of _____, 20____.

Witness

Lunenburg County REMO
Representative:

Witness

Facility Owner:
Representative:

Comfort Centre Facility Profile

General Information		
Name of Facility		Civic Address of Facility
Municipality		Mailing Address of Facility
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:		Capacity of Facility
Comfort Centre <i>(no overnight accommodations)</i> Emergency Shelter		Comfort Centre Emergency Shelter
Services that could be offered at a Comfort Centre:		
<input type="checkbox"/> A place to get warm/cool <input type="checkbox"/> Charge electronic devices <input type="checkbox"/> Washroom facilities <input type="checkbox"/> Share information/updates <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="checkbox"/> Light refreshments <input type="checkbox"/> Tea/coffee <input type="checkbox"/> Potable or Bottled Water <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-packaged food <input type="checkbox"/> Prepared food		
Location of Emergency First Aid Kit?		Location of Automated External Defibrillator (AED)?

Physical Information			
Wheelchair Accessible		Washrooms Accessible	Elevators, chair lift, etc.?
Yes	No	Yes	No
Number of Washrooms?		Number of Showers?	
Male _____	Female _____	Unisex _____	Male _____
Physical Dimensions, Approx. Square Footage		Is there a room for 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?	Is there an Emergency Evacuation Plan?
Municipal Sewer	Septic		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			Circuit Breakers Fuses
Generator	Type			Generator Testing	
Yes	Fixed	Manual Transfer Switch			Frequency:
No	Portable	Automatic Transfer Switch			Last Tested:
Capacity				Make, Model, Size:	
Full Building		Limited			
List the areas served including elevators, and lifts, rooms, etc.					

Miscellaneous						
Primary Heating Source		Electric	Propane	Natural Gas	Oil	Other
Times the Comfort Centre 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 Centre be required on short notice?				How do the volunteers get mobilized for the Comfort Centre?		
Yes		No				
Date Completed				Completed by (please print)		
Notes and special features or anything else related to the facility.						