WHATCOM COUNTY
Health Department

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SEVERE WEATHER SHELTERS

Guiding Assumptions:

1. The Health Department Director will determine when severe cold weather conditions pose life-threatening circumstances and severe weather shelter(s) should open. The guidelines below will be used in the decision-making process.

2. The temperature threshold of 28°F forecasted as the overnight low will activate the opening of a severe weather shelter. Precipitation of 2" forecasted or on the ground if freezing temperature (32˚) threshold is reached is also an activation factor.

3. Temperature ranges collected at the Bellingham Airport from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will be the only source utilized for determining whether the weather threshold is met.

4. Wind Chill used as a factor for weather threshold is extremely variable due to gusts, nine micro-climates in the county, and challenges with forecasting sustained winds. Wind Chill will be considered and the negotiated contract(s) will define the parameters of when wind conditions may activate shelter opening.

5. Contracted organizations will have final say on whom they serve, within the guidelines of the contract. More vulnerable populations will be prioritized. Capacity constraints of contracted organizations may also limit the number of days a severe weather shelter can be offered.

6. Unique requests (i.e., pets, couples, meals) will be considered, but may not be accommodated due to insufficient contracted organization capacity.

7. Twenty-four hours advance notice, when possible, will be provided to the contracted organization(s) when requesting the opening of a severe weather shelter.

8. Severe Weather shelter(s) will be deactivated when thresholds for forecasted severe weather are no longer met

9. Nothing prohibits organizations from opening their own shelters during severe weather, but public resources will not be offered without a prearranged contract.

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