



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members Board of Health
COMMITTEE DATE:	January 16, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Cold Alert Trigger and Response Process Review (BOH23005) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY:	Kevin McDonald Director, Health Environments Division Public Health Services
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This report provides information about Cold Alerts issued by Hamilton Public Health Services and the related response process followed by City and community services providers. In addition, information related to a review of the Cold Alert triggers and response process is provided below.

INFORMATION

Background

Since the 2000/2001 winter season, the Office of the Medical Officer of Health has issued 'Cold Alerts' for the purpose of notifying community members of the risk to health from exposure to extreme cold temperatures and how to access support for vulnerable persons in need of shelter. The original Cold Alert threshold value (i.e., trigger) of -15°C was designed to warn of times when the risk of acute frostbite and hypothermia from exposure were further heightened, especially for those most vulnerable to its effects, such as homeless individuals, the elderly and small children.

The alerts trigger increased outreach to homeless individuals by community agencies to encourage people to access available shelter services and expanded services offered in anticipation of the potential that more individuals would be utilizing identified services during those times. The Cold Alert triggers and response plan have historically been predicated on the understanding that access to warm, dry, safe shelter or housing is essential.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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In the fall of 2006, Hamilton Public Health Services received new information from Environment Canada (now Environment and Climate Change Canada), and following consultation and subsequent evaluation with community partners, revised the threshold to include wind chill (i.e., -15°C, OR -20°C windchill). The current thresholds are largely consistent with the public health units in Ontario that employ Cold Alert protocols.

Moving Forward

Public Health Services staff will conduct a scientific review of the available evidence related to the impact of cold weather events on health. In addition, the review will include an environmental scan of current Cold Alert thresholds and response protocols for the cities of Toronto, Ottawa, and other Ontario public health unit jurisdictions.

In addition to the planned review referenced above, Public Health Services staff together with Housing Division staff will engage and consult with community service providers and stakeholders with respect to their concerns specific to Cold Alert thresholds and response plans to inform any potential changes in policy. Please refer to Appendix “A” to Report BOH23005 for the current 2022 City of Hamilton Extreme Cold Weather Protocol.

Public Health Services staff plan to bring forward a Recommendation Report detailing specific options and recommendations related to Cold Alert thresholds to the April 3, 2023 Board of Health meeting.

In addition to the Housing Division funding ‘The Hub’ as a warming centre as a mitigation measure through until March 31, 2023, the Housing Division is planning to bring forward a Recommendation Report to the Emergency & Community Services Committee on January 19, 2023 that provides recommendations related to enhanced access to drop-in warming centres for the duration of the 2023 winter season.

More information about the City’s Community Cold Response and to access a complete list of ongoing community resources serving people experiencing homelessness including emergency shelters, and drop-in locations can be found by visiting www.hamilton.ca/cold.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

“Appendix A” to Report BOH23005

City of Hamilton Extreme Cold
Weather Protocol (2022)