



## Disaster Event Checklist:

### Warnings and Notifications to People Experiencing Homelessness

When disasters occur, the Communications Lead will ensure planned outreach occurs so that warnings and notifications reach homeless and other vulnerable people. This checklist provides a list of key actions to help warnings and notifications reach everyone in your community, including the most vulnerable and hard to reach. Ideally, the jurisdiction has prepared to do this outreach (See the [Preparedness Checklist](#)), but if not, adapt mainstream efforts as best possible to reach the more vulnerable people in the community.<sup>1</sup>

#### Pre-Disaster Warnings

Some disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, allow for a few days warning. In those cases, take full advantage of these days to locate people experiencing homelessness and ensure they are informed of the impending disaster and the actions they should take. Use the systems you have established.

- Deploy the outreach team.** Coordinate with the designated outreach lead to send the outreach workers into the community to provide verbal and written warnings.
  - Send the team to pre-identified locations.
  - Track outreach to ensure that all key areas are covered.
  - Make adjustments to outreach strategies, as data on contacts made comes in.
- Distribute warning cards in local languages.** Ideally, you have developed these cards in advance.
  - Update the information if necessary.
  - Use your outreach team and local service providers.
  - *If you have not developed warning cards in advance*, quickly prepare a handout with key information about the nature and timing of the disaster, required actions, evacuation and shelter points, and emergency numbers.
- Send text messages.** Confirm that the designated person(s) are sending messages. Use the same warning messages you are sending to the general population, but consider if there is additional information that should be included for homeless and other vulnerable people. (See [Preparedness Checklist](#) for more details.)
- Track progress.** Maintain regular contact with outreach team members.
  - Confirm that they have covered all the geographic areas and are reaching the people that were in your outreach plan.
  - Identify and respond to any unexpected issues that arise.

**If you have not prepared for outreach to homeless and other vulnerable people**, reach out immediately to [your CoC](#) or homeless services provider network to provide full information to them about the evacuation and provide any support they need to reach their clients.

<sup>1</sup> This checklist supports Emergency Support Function (ESF) #2 (Communications).



## During the Disaster

Regular and persistent outreach is necessary during the disaster to ensure that as conditions develop people experiencing homelessness remain informed of developments.

- Continue active outreach in the field.** At times throughout the disaster, your outreach team should go out into the community (making allowances for their safety) and to disaster shelters to ensure that people have not been overlooked.
- Make contact with facilities where people are sheltered.** Stay in touch with all shelters to confirm that their emergency plans are being implemented. This includes disaster shelters, emergency shelters, and other places that have been set up to take in people on an emergency basis.
  - Use your established contact list or phone tree.
  - Identify shelters with vacancies, those that are over capacity, and coordinate transfers where necessary.
- Track and communicate progress.** As conditions change on the ground, communicate through updates to your network.
  - Maintain regular contact with outreach teams, shelters, and service providers.
  - Continue to broadcast updates through all your communication media.
  - Hold regular meetings or calls, as possible, to create a cohesive message for providers serving those during a disaster.
  - Provide a real-time resource person for shelters to contact as they need medical or other basic assistance throughout the duration of the disaster and recovery.

## Post-Disaster Communication

After the disaster, people experiencing homelessness need to know that it is safe to return to the area. Ideally, you and/or service providers should be providing them with information on continued options for shelter and services.

- Continue to deploy outreach team.** After the disaster, the outreach team should be in the field to ensure that people are aware of information on services. Maintain communication with the outreach lead.
- Reach out to shelters and service providers.** Let them know when the threat has passed and people can return to pre-disaster locations.
- Use the media to reach people who may have left the area.** Use TV, radio, and text messages to broadcast messages beyond your immediate community.
- Provide information about housing and shelter options, services available, and disaster recovery programs.** A critical part of helping all populations recover after a disaster is providing information about how the whole community can safely return. Services and disaster recovery programs should meet needs of all community members, including very low-income households.
  - When the threat has passed, work with disaster recovery teams to inform residents about how to return safely to their community and what services are available to support them.
  - It can be difficult to identify appropriate housing options, when housing stock is damaged by the disaster. Finding places and helping vulnerable people access them requires partnerships. The relationships you developed during the planning phase are helpful in this instance.