# RE: Severe Weather Shelter Expansion Needed

**From:** "Baxter, Lori (MOS)" <lori.baxter2@seattle.gov>
**To:** "Moore, Cathy" <cathy.moore@seattle.gov>
**Cc:** "Nolte, Dan (MOS)" <dan.nolte@seattle.gov>
**Date:** Fri, 12 Jan 2024 16:31:43 -0800

Good afternoon, Councilmember Moore –

Before we head into the weekend, I wanted to provide you with some quick information on some of the City's severe weather outreach efforts happening today and over the long weekend, in response to the email below.

**UCT Outreach**

Regional Coordinators on the Unified Care Team (UCT) have been conducting additional outreach this week to inform unsheltered neighbors about emergency shelter options and to distribute gloves, hats, hand warmers, and emergency blankets. Coordinating transport to shelter is part of UCT's regular work; on Friday, two large passenger vans were employed to increase capacity for transporting people to shelter sites and warming centers. UCT field coordinators also offered storage of personal property for those who moved into severe weather shelters.

**SFD/Health One**

Seattle Fire Department will have two Health One units and their Medical Ambulance Bus in-service today and overnight, and on Saturday. The units will be equipped with cold-weather supplies, including clothing, blankets, hand warmers, food and warm drinks. The Medical Ambulance Bus will travel to pre-identified larger encampment locations to provide unsheltered individuals a break from the cold and help coordinate transport to a warming center.

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My colleagues at HSD reached out earlier today to our partners at KCRHA to understand what outreach may be taking place over the weekend and KCRHA reported that multiple providers are scheduled to be out on different days over the holiday weekend, including Catholic Community Services, REACH, and others. KCRHA can provide more information about their severe weather outreach services, but in the meantime, I wanted to let you know how the City is supplementing their efforts to bring more people indoors during this cold-weather event.

Please reach out if there are any questions I can assist with,

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**From:** Sharon Lee <sharonl@lihi.org>
**Sent:** Friday, January 12, 2024 12:52 PM
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**Cc:** Jon Grant <jon.grant@lihi.org>; Ralph Neis <rneis@lihi.org>; William Towey <william@lakecitypartners.org>; Alison Eisinger <alison.eisinger@gmail.com>
**Subject:** Severe Weather Shelter Expansion Needed

**CAUTION: External Email**

Dear Council President Nelson, Council Members, Director Kim, and CEO Howell,

We are writing to you with urgency concerning the present cold snap where temperatures are projected to be as low as 11 degrees Fahrenheit over the next several days. The King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) has declared a "Tier 3" response to the severe weather, which is triggered when temperatures drop below 30 degrees. Our homeless response system needs to dramatically increase shelter capacity during this emergency.

Unfortunately in KCRHA's 1/10/24 severe weather announcement has only 193 additional shelter beds in Seattle being activated. This is unacceptable, given that the vast majority of unsheltered homeless people sleep on Seattle's streets. The last available "Point In Time" count for King County found 13,368 people experiencing homelessness, and of those 57% were unsheltered. People cannot survive sleeping outside at temperatures that low; this is a matter of life and death.

There also needs to be a coordinated outreach effort to reach unsheltered homeless people and alert them when those beds become available. In prior years, we have heard the excuse that shelter sites go unused even during inclement weather, so there is "no need" to activate more space. However, it is our experience that shelter beds go unused because of insufficient outreach - homeless people do not have regular access to email announcements and the Internet, and would not necessarily know where to look for this information. The problem is compounded because outreach workers only work during the day, when more unsheltered people can be reached at night.

For example, KCRHA contracted with LIHI to open our Lakefront Community House shelter during a severe weather event last year. We received no referrals or walk-ins, so our staff took the initiative and drove around the immediate neighborhood in a van picking people up; immediately filling our shelter.

There are thousands of unsheltered people at risk due to the extreme drop in temperature. Please work with nonprofits, faith partners, and city agencies to provide

warm spaces, staffing, transportation, and financial resources immediately to save lives.

Sharon Lee

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