



Date: January 9, 2003

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation  
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation  
SUBJECT: EMERGENCY SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAM

---

## RECOMMENDATION

*That the Board receive this report for information.*

## BACKGROUND

Provincial legislation requires that every municipality have an emergency plan. The City of Vancouver's plan consists of a compilation of Departmental Emergency Plans that describe the roles of each city department in the event of an earthquake or other catastrophic disaster. Part of every emergency plan is the care and support of residents evacuated or otherwise displaced from their homes.

The Vancouver Park Board has assumed the responsibility for this as part of our Emergency Response Plan. The Park Board also carries the role of support to Police, Fire and Urban Search and Rescue if needed for building assessment, debris removal and equipment and personnel support. The Emergency Social Services (ESS) Co-ordinator is based at Evans Yard, and there is an ESS Headquarters room in the City Emergency Operations Centre at E-Comm. The Emergency Operations Centre would be activated in a major emergency to support the work of the first response city departments. ESS Headquarters would manage and support the operation of emergency evacuation centres in the city. Community Centres are the primary facilities to be used, with schools, cultural and religious facilities as back up facilities.

### Emergency Social Services

Emergency Social Services (ESS) is the provision of essential services to residents evacuated from their homes in an emergency or disaster. The ESS Plan includes the following components: provision of food, clothing, shelter, family re-unification, volunteer co-ordination, personal services such as meet and greet, child care, services to the disabled, pet services, first aid and others.

The ESS Program is a volunteer-based service supported by various agencies and co-ordinated by the Vancouver Park Board. There are 493 registered volunteers on 12 ESS teams within the City. There is 130 Park Board staff trained in the basic management of an emergency reception centre. There are 3 designated alternates to the ESS Co-ordinator in the case he/she is unable to respond, or there is a need for a lengthy operational period.

The active agencies supporting the ESS volunteers are the Vancouver Park Board, Red Cross, Ministry of Human Resources, Police Victim Services, Vancouver School Board, City of Vancouver Risk and Emergency Management, Regional Health, Salvation Army, VECTOR Amateur Radio, St. John Ambulance, Information Services Vancouver, City Community Housing Group and the Justice Institute of BC.

Each of the 12 ESS teams are directed by a steering committee comprised of local ESS volunteers and a designated staff representative. Generally they meet once a month and are responsible for maintaining a call-out list of local trained volunteers, generating community interest in the team, developing a plan for the use of the facility in an emergency and the storage of emergency supplies on-site. The steering committees also identify volunteer training needs and participates in at least 2 functional or tabletop exercises a year. An ESS website on the Park Board server supports the teams and provides an important communication link.

Over the past year ESS activities included two functional exercises, ten tabletop exercises and training in Reception Centre Management, Group Lodging Management, Management of Walk-in Disaster Volunteers, ESS Administrative Support, Family Reunification Procedures and First Aid. Dr. Jack Poe from the Oklahoma City Police Department was brought in the speak to the volunteers about the Oklahoma City bombing and the long term effects on the community.

ESS emergency supplies are pre-positioned in containers at 11 community centres, 2 works yards, the PNE and E-Comm. These containers have enough cots, blankets, cooking apparatus and other supplies to sustain 200 evacuees at each location. The community-based ESS teams have been supplementing these with other supplies. Eventually the city will fund the placement of a container at every community centre.

With the help of VECTOR Amateur Radio group, ham radio operators have been assigned to each of the 12 ESS facilities, and there is a radio room in the EOC at E-Comm. With the support of the Community Associations, six centres have purchased radio equipment for their facilities.

### **ESS Disaster Assistance Team**

The ESS Disaster Assistance Team is a response group of 14 volunteers who are called to fire scenes throughout Vancouver to assist fire victims who need emergency lodging, food or other services. The volunteers are recruited from the 12 community teams in Vancouver and are trained, oriented and managed by the ESS Co-ordinator. The team is on-call 24 hours/day, 7 days/ week and is activated by the Fire Department or the 911 Dispatch Centre. In 2002, the Disaster Assistance Team responded to 24 calls and assisted 237 residents.

The Disaster Assistance Team won the Red Cross Community Service Award in 1999 and has been given special recognition by the Mayor for their work in the community. The team has been co-ordinated by the Vancouver Park Board since 1997.

### **Funding**

The annual budget for the ESS Program is \$69,000.00 which covers the staff costs (shared 50/50 with the city) and emergency pagers.

Prepared by:  
Vancouver East District  
Board of Parks and Recreation  
Vancouver B.C.