

Date: February 15, 2006



**TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board**  
**FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation**  
**SUBJECT: Emergency Social Services Program**

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## 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 a major disaster. An integral aspect of every municipal emergency plan is the support and care of residents evacuated or displaced from their homes called Emergency Social Services (ESS). The Vancouver Park Board has the responsibility for this 'human side of disaster response'. The Park Board also supports Police, Fire, and Urban Search and Rescue, if needed, for building assessment and debris removal.

### Emergency Social Services Plan

The ESS Plan includes the provision of food, clothing, shelter, family re-unification, volunteer co-ordination, child care, services to the disabled, pet services, first aid and others. These services are on a short-term basis, generally for 72 hours to preserve the emotional and physical well-being of evacuees and response workers in emergency situations. The focus of Emergency Social Services is to:

- help people remain independent and self-sufficient
- help people meet their basic survival needs during a disaster
- reunite families separated by disaster
- provide people with accurate and up-to-date information about the situation
- help people re-establish themselves as quickly as possible after a disaster

The ESS Program is a volunteer-based service coordinated by the Vancouver Park Board. There are 505 registered volunteers on eight ESS teams within the City. There are 100 Park Board staff trained in the basic management of an emergency reception centre.

Each of the eight ESS teams is 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, training volunteers and participating in at least two exercises a year. An ESS website on the Park Board server supports the teams and provides an important communication link.

### **Emergency Reception Centres**

The ESS Program will manage and support the operation of emergency reception centres in the city during a disaster response. ESS emergency supplies are pre-positioned in containers at 18 community centres, five works yards, PNE, and E-Comm. These containers have cots, blankets, cooking apparatus and other supplies to sustain 200 evacuees at each location. This is undertaken with the cooperation of various agencies such as Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, The Salvation Army, and the Provincial Emergency Program. With the help of VECTOR Amateur Radio group, ham radio operators have been assigned to each of the eight ESS facilities, and there is a radio room in the Emergency Operations Centre at E-Comm.

### **Role of Park Board Commissioners**

Park Board Commissioners are not required to perform a specific function in the initial stage of an emergency response. Once the city has begun the recovery aspect of the disaster response, the General Manager will meet with Commissioners to discuss the priority response plan for the Park Board. This may include assistance in determining how the Park Board will handle any ongoing challenges the disaster has presented and setting priorities regarding the resumption of business. A copy of the Emergency Plan for Park Board Commissioners is attached as Appendix 1.

### **ESS Disaster Assistance Team**

The ESS Disaster Assistance Team is a response group of 10 volunteers who are called to scenes throughout Vancouver to assist victims who need emergency lodging, food or other services. The team is on-call 24 hours/day, 7 days/week and is activated by the Fire Department or the 911 Dispatch Centre. In 2005, the Disaster Assistance Team responded to 23 calls and assisted 192 residents.

### **Funding**

The annual budget for the ESS Program is \$66,000 which covers staff costs for one position (shared 50/50 with the city) and emergency pagers.

Prepared by  
Vancouver East District  
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation