

ESTABLISHING EMERGENCY CLIMATE SHELTERS IN RESPONSE TO THE INCLEMENT WEATHER CRISIS

Southern California’s fires, intense heat, and dry summers stand as one of the major challenges facing local governments, with profound impacts on ecosystems, economies, and communities throughout the region. In Los Angeles County, the escalating frequency and severity of heat waves, exacerbated by flash fires, pose an urgent and life-threatening risk to our most vulnerable populations. Among those most acutely affected are the unhoused residents who lack adequate shelter from these extreme weather conditions. As stewards of public health and safety, it is our moral and civic duty to address this crisis with decisive and compassionate action.

For decades, Los Angeles County has grappled with the issue of homelessness, implementing various strategies and initiatives aimed at providing temporary and permanent housing solutions. Historically, emergency shelters were primarily available during the winter months, focusing on protecting individuals from cold weather. However, the rapid acceleration of climate change demands a paradigm shift in our approach to emergency housing. Rising temperatures, prolonged heat waves, and unpredictable weather patterns now necessitate year-round shelters equipped to handle both cold and extreme heat, and mitigate the negative health impacts of these climate extremes.

Recent climate models predict that Los Angeles will experience record-breaking temperatures in the coming years, with heat waves lasting longer and becoming more intense. This summer was one of the hottest seasons on record, with temperatures expected to remain dangerously high well into October. These conditions pose severe health risks, including heat exhaustion, heat stroke, all of which will raise risks of other co-morbidities and increase negative health outcomes among those without access to cooling centers or adequate shelter. The current infrastructure is insufficient to meet the growing need for emergency housing during these critical periods.

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MOTION

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The existing emergency response framework must be re-evaluated and expanded to address these new realities. Our seasonal winter shelters must be transformed to operate year-round, providing safe havens from both winter cold and summer heat. This requires a coordinated, county-wide effort that leverages public lands, expedited permitting processes, and mobilizes resources swiftly and efficiently. We must also ensure that these shelters are not merely temporary fixes but integral components of a broader strategy to transition individuals into permanent housing and fit into the existing network of shelter beds across the County.

Moreover, the complexity of inclement weather conditions and its intersection with homelessness necessitates a multi-faceted response that includes the collaboration of various stakeholders. City and county agencies, community organizations, educational institutions, and faith-based groups must work in unison to deliver comprehensive housing and services that address the immediate needs of our unhoused population while laying the groundwork for long-term solutions.

This proposal calls for the establishment of a robust emergency shelter response system, underpinned by clear protocols, measurable outcomes, and a commitment to transparency and accountability. By creating a network of strategically located emergency shelters, we can provide immediate relief to those in need, reduce heat-related health emergencies, and build resilience against future inclement weather impacts.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the County Chief Executive Office (CEO) to report back in 90 days to identify funding for the construction, re-habilitation, or acquisition and operation of at least 1 emergency shelter in each Service Planning Area (SPA) in LA County, with consideration of modular construction or other innovative design options.
 - a. Identify potential for partnering with local jurisdictions that can identify land and/or capital costs. Prioritize County funding for services at sites.
2. Direct County CEO-Real Estate Development to report back in 90 days to identify sites and/or space in each SPA (e.g., unused parking lots) for the temporary placement of emergency shelter or construction of emergency shelter on public or private lands.
3. Direct CEO-Homeless Initiative to coordinate with the following County Departments: Mental Health, Public Social Services, Health Services, Public Health, Children and Family Services, Justice, Care and Opportunities, Military and Veteran's Affairs, in consultation with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and Metro to report back in 90 days to identify funding – including underspend - for emergency climate shelters.

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4. Direct CEO, with input from LAHSA, to report back in 90 days with service delivery model for emergency climate shelters, including 24/7 availability, including an emergency meeting to conduct a capacity assessment with all Los Angeles County service providers to identify resources needs, logistical challenges, and potential areas for collaboration. This should include funding options for two levels of Service Delivery such as:
 - a. Core Support: Each shelter will provide three meals a day, showers, bathrooms, hygiene products, clothes, problem solving/family reunification, and other basic needs. This should also include onsite security.
 - b. Comprehensive Support Services: This includes medical services, harm reduction, connections to mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment resources, emergency shelter, document readiness, record clearing, housing navigation, connection to time limited subsidies (TLS)/shallow subsidy, job training, and all applicable City and County resources.
5. Direct CEO-HI to report back on the progress towards citing, construction, and/or acquisition of emergency shelter. Once a path towards building emergency shelters has been established, CEO-HI will report back to the Board on the effectiveness of the emergency shelters with regular evaluations, as part of the ongoing updates associated with the Emergency Declaration. These evaluations will assess the impact of shelters on resident health and well-being which will incorporate feedback from shelter residents and service providers that will be integral in refining and improving the emergency response system. Mechanisms for collecting and analyzing feedback will be established to ensure continuous improvement.
6. The Executive Committee on Regional Homeless Alignment (ECHRA) shall convene “Regional Roundtables” with elected officials from the County and 88 municipalities within Los Angeles County to discuss the creation of collaborative agreements for regional shelter sites. This should include exploring city and County joint funding agreements and consulting local jurisdictions to assist in identifying sites. These meetings will be hosted by the Chair and Co-Chair of ECHRA.
7. Delegate authority to the CEO and the Executive Office of the Board, or their designees, to execute any agreements necessary to support the foregoing efforts, provided that any such agreements and in form are approved by County Counsel.

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