

Coalition of Housing and Homeless Organizations (COHHO)

Hypothermia 2007-08 Comments

To: Deputy Mayor-City Administrator Dan Tangherlini
Clarence H. Carter, Director, DHS
Laura G. Zeilinger, Deputy Director, DHS
Patricia Handy, Homelessness Services, DHS
Chapman Todd, Chair, Operations & Logistics Committee,
DC Interagency Council on Homelessness
Councilmember Tommy Wells, Chair, Committee on Human Services

These comments are submitted on behalf of the Coalition of Housing and Homeless Organizations (COHHO). COHHO is a diverse group of non-profit organizations and individuals in the District of Columbia who have a common goal of ending homelessness. A list of current COHHO members is attached.

COHHO has been at the forefront of gathering data and monitoring information about cold and heat alerts during hypothermia and hyperthermia seasons.¹ Exposure to extreme cold or extreme heat can result in death, and for homeless persons the risk of exposure to such extreme temperatures is a daily reality. For this reason, COHHO and its members have developed a system for tracking the daily weather conditions, the alert status, the nightly census in the homeless shelters, and, for the first time in 2007-2008, the open status of all the emergency shelters contracted in the District of Columbia's Continuum of Care, including hypothermia shelters.

The information for the 2007-2008 Hypothermia Season (November 1, 2007 – March 31, 2008) can be found in the attached two-part Hypothermia Chart. There are several sets of data incorporated into this Hypothermia Chart.

The weather data in the Hypothermia Chart is taken from the Official Weather Data for Washington, DC, in [The Washington Post](#). It is the actual data recorded each day. An alert is required by the Homeless Services Reform Act when the actual or forecasted temperature or wind chill will be 32° Fahrenheit or below. Thus, we measure when an alert should have been called based on actual readings. It is possible that more alerts should have been called based on forecasts.

¹ COHHO or its member organizations have reported on Hypothermia for more than five years. COHHO's reports are intended to amplify, not replace, reports prepared by or for The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness.

Once an alert is called, the hypothermia shelters are required to open and United Planning Organization (UPO) vans pick up homeless persons from the streets and take them to shelters. The Hypothermia Chart tracks census data for the emergency shelters according to men, women, family groups, and number of family members. The maximum number of people housed on one day this winter was **2,838**. At the end of the season the number was hovering around **2,600**. On the last day of the season there were 1,565 men, 412 women, and 188 family groups consisting of 612 persons.

To our knowledge, there were **no deaths** in the 2007-08 hypothermia season that were officially attributed to hypothermia in the District of Columbia. This is extremely good news. We believe the tragedy of hypothermia death is preventable, and the ultimate purpose of our charting is to assist in that prevention.

Although it was a mild winter with few ice days and the emergency shelter system expanded to meet the need, it was still tight. For example, for most of the season three men's hypothermia shelters were open on non-alert days. At the end of the season, one women's hypothermia shelter opened on non-alert days, because of a fire at a non-hypothermia shelter. The family accommodations at DC General Hospital were open every day after November 3rd.

COHHO recognizes the positive steps forward that have been made to the system, yet there is still room for improvement.

COHHO recommends that additional hypothermia shelters be identified so that there is adequate space for the 2008-2009 Hypothermia season. This need is especially acute given the anticipated closing of Franklin School Shelter and the closing of most shelter facilities at DC General.

COHHO found that based on actual data for the 2007-2008 Hypothermia Season (November 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008), alerts should have been called on **83** days. Alerts were actually called on only **64** of those days. That means that alerts were missed on 19 days, almost one-fourth of the time! COHHO is distressed at the number of missed alerts.

Alerts were also called on 10 days that they did not appear to be needed. COHHO suggests examining the data for those dates to determine whether resources were applied appropriately.

COHHO notes that even when alerts are called, the timing is often problematic. For example, alerts are not always called before the shelters begin to close for the day. Some shelters ask their residents to leave as early as 5 a.m. so they can close their doors at 7:00 a.m. When an alert is not called until much later, this leaves people on the streets, stranded without transportation until an alert is called. In one instance this past hypothermia season an alert was not called until 11:00 p.m.

COHHO recommends that The Community Partnership or its subcontractor track the time of day the alert is called.

COHHO recommends that The Community Partnership or its subcontractor track the number of vans that are available on a given day or given night.

COHHO recommends that The Community Partnership analyze and report to the public or the DC Interagency Council on Homelessness about the extent to which the timing of a change in the security shift in shelters and the timing of a change in the van drivers' shifts affect the decision as to whether or when to call an alert.

COHHO's most high-priority recommendation is as follows: If severe winter weather is predicted, a representative of the Washington Council of Governments (who monitors the 2:00 am weather predictions of the National Weather Service and notifies, by phone and e-mail, various parties such as DCHSEMA in the event of predicted severe winter weather) also notify DHS, TCP, and/or UPO by 4:00 a.m. whenever the statutory threshold for an alert is met. Such a practice would ensure more consistent calling of alerts and would allow the giving of notice to the shelters before closing procedures are instituted. COHHO believes adoption of such a procedure would also virtually eliminate the failure to call alerts on days when the statutory standards are satisfied. Accordingly, COHHO strongly urges that such policy be adopted for the 2008-2009 Hypothermia Season.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Simerly and Melvin Watkins,
Co-Conveners

On behalf of COHHO

Approved by COHHO July 10, 2008

Hypothermia 2007-08 Chart COHHO

Key: The "Hypo Status Except" column shows the general "O"pen or "C"losed status of the hypothermia shelters, and it shows the e"X"ception(s) by a number. Numbers 1 through 12 indicate hypothermia shelters, which are identified on the last page. Number 13 indicates a permanent shelter which closed because of a fire.

													HYPO STATUS	NOTES
DATE	HIGH	LO	HUM	PRECIP	WIND CHILL	ALERT	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	FAM UNIT	FAM PER	EXCEPT		
11/1/2007	74	54	86%	0	73	N	1895	1256	330	102	309	C		
11/2/2007	59	45	60%	0	60	N	1789	1166	335	100	288	C		
11/3/2007	63	46	60%	0	64	N	1794	1153	327	103	314	C		
11/4/2007	61	48	58%	0	62	N	1889	1238	346	100	305	C		
11/5/2007	62	42	82%	0.03	63	N	1969	1310	352	101	307	C		
11/6/2007	58	45	76%	0.07	59	N	1961	1310	353	101	298	C		
11/7/2007	53	39	59%	0	34	N	1962	1299	353	101	310	C		
11/8/2007	49	33	75%	0	28	N	1982	1309	367	100	306	C		
11/9/2007	48	39	82%	0.07	35	N	1917	1267	348	99	302	C		
11/10/2007	50	42	82%	Trace	36	N	1922	1264	347	101	311	C		
11/11/2007	53	35	82%	Trace	29	N	1933	1278	353	99	302	C		
11/12/2007	56	45	85%	0.25	41	N	2000	1326	357	102	317	C		
11/13/2007	63	50	93%	0.08	50	N	1979	1308	354	102	317	C		
11/14/2007	69	49	92%	Trace	46	N	1945	1287	343	102	315	C		
11/15/2007	65	45	85%	0.8	39	Y 11PM	2000	1327	355	103	318	C x 6		
11/16/2007	48	37	65%	0	33	Y	1981	1314	347	104	320	O		
11/17/2007	53	36	61%	0	31	N	1860	1201	339	104	320	C		
11/18/2007	58	44	83%	0	40	N	1911	1250	341	104	320	C		
11/19/2007	47	43	85%	0	37	N	1954	1287	347	104	320	C		
11/20/2007	58	46	88%	Trace	42	N	1933	1260	345	106	328	C		
11/21/2007	72	50	89%	0	47	N	1807	1146	323	108	338	C		

													HYPO STATUS	NOTES
DATE	HIGH	LO	HUM	PRECIP	WIND CHILL	ALERT	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	FAM UNIT	FAM PER	EXCEPT		
11/22/2007	77	45	77%	Trace	41	N	1907	1237	335	107	335	C x 6		
11/23/2007	47	37	55%	0	32	N	1935	1271	325	109	339	C x 6		
11/24/2007	44	30	69%	0	23	Y	2037	1299	399	109	339	O		
11/25/2007	52	39	64%	0	35	N	1995	1309	352	107	334	C x 6, 7		
11/26/2007	64	45	89%	0.11	39	N	2001	1328	346	106	327	C		
11/27/2007	64	48	86%	0	45	N	2124	1405	351	117	368	C x 4, 6		
11/28/2007	49	39	54%	0	30	N	2155	1460	349	120	346	C x 4, 6		
11/29/2007	61	38	73%	0	32	N	2117	1398	349	118	370	C x 4, 6		
11/30/2007	50	36	50%	0	30	Y	1979	1271	329	121	379	O		
12/1/2007	45	35	61%	Trace	28	Y	1995	1287	329	120	379	O		
12/2/2007	46	36	88%	0.17	32	Y	2089	1382	328	121	379	O		
12/3/2007	53	38	89%	0	28	Y	2267	1529	357	123	381	O		
12/4/2007	42	32	51%	Trace	26	Y	2346	1574	367	129	405	O		
12/5/2007	34	30	92%	0.22	25	Y	2386	1609	371	130	406	O		
12/6/2007	34	23	77%	0	12	Y	2308	1537	368	129	403	O		
12/7/2007	37	27	81%	0.04	21	Y	2235	1479	348	130	408	O		
12/8/2007	48	37	89%	0.14	36	Y	2127	1389	342	131	396	O		
12/9/2007	44	41	88%	0.14	37	N	2183	1419	357	131	407	C x 4		
12/10/2007	54	42	88%	0.07	38	N	2241	1477	347	132	417	C x 4		
12/11/2007	50	44	93%	Trace	40	N	2174	1423	329	134	422	C x 4		Adams PI Closed
12/12/2007	64	48	89%	0	41	N	2227	1453	341	137	433	C x 4		Adams PI Closed
12/13/2007	47	38	86%	0.02	32	N	2239	1460	350	135	429	C x 4		
12/14/2007	55	39	86%	0	33	Y	2217	1438	339	140	440	O		
12/15/2007	40	34	81%	0.02	27	Y	2263	1488	337	139	438	O		
12/16/2007	49	36	85%	0.85	19	Y	2295	1508	352	139	435	O		
12/17/2007	41	31	53%	0	22	Y	2403	1601	356	144	446	O		
12/18/2007	41	27	63%	0	19	Y	2472	1571	449	146	452	O		
12/19/2007	42	36	61%	0	29	Y	2337	1539	347	146	451	O		
12/20/2007	49	31	78%	0	24	Y	2363	1539	360	150	464	O		
12/21/2007	46	36	82%	0	30	Y	2349	1460	433	148	456	O		

													HYPO STATUS	NOTES
DATE	HIGH	LO	HUM	PRECIP	WIND CHILL	ALERT	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	FAM UNIT	FAM PER	EXCEPT		
12/22/2007	46	41	87%	Trace	35	N	2157	1378	329	146	450	C x 2, 4		
12/23/2007	64	44	93%	0.26	37	N	2204	1416	335	147	453	C x 2, 4		
12/24/2007	53	35	70%	0.01	30	N	2119	1371	320	137	428	C x 2, 4		
12/25/2007	52	38	72%	0	31	N	2173	1392	338	144	443	C x 2, 4, 5		
12/26/2007	41	36	86%	0.32	30	N	2290	1516	343	139	431	C x 2, 4, 5		
12/27/2007	58	38	82%	0	32	N	2332	1478	421	139	433	C x 2, 4, 5		
12/28/2007	50	35	89%	0.38	35	N	2334	1478	421	140	435	C x 2, 4, 5		
12/29/2007	56	42	89%	0.21	35	N	2247	1386	426	140	435	C x 2, 4, 5		
12/30/2007	45	39	86%	0.12	32	Y	2315	1435	439	141	441	O		
12/31/2007	50	34	88%	0.01	28	Y	2136	1364	329	142	443	O		
1/1/2008	54	38	78%	0	27	Y	2383	1494	444	142	445	O		
1/2/2008	38	26	59%	Trace	11	Y	2564	1654	450	146	460	O		
1/3/2008	34	22	52%	0	8	Y	2527	1602	461	147	464	O		
1/4/2008	41	21	71%	0	14	Y	2424	1519	442	147	463	O		
1/5/2008	43	28	68%	Trace	25	N	2320	1432	425	147	463	C x 2, 4, 5		
1/6/2008	55	38	85%	0.2	35	N	2360	1467	430	147	463	C x 2, 4		
1/7/2008	69	45	77%	0	44	Y	2292	1499	330	146	463	C x 2, 4		
1/8/2008	73	48	86%	0	44	N	2301	1502	342	145	457	C x 2, 4		
1/9/2008	68	51	83%	0.01	46	N	2383	1519	391	149	473	C x 2, 4, 5		
1/10/2008	52	40	85%	0.18	34	N	2436	1531	435	148	470	C x 2, 4, 5		
1/11/2008	59	43	93%	0.27	40	N	2331	1441	427	148	463	C x 2, 4, 5		
1/12/2008	54	42	70%	0	38	N	2325	1442	418	148	465	C x 2, 4, 5		
1/13/2008	49	36	82%	0.03	30	N	2392	1487	437	149	468	C x 2, 4, 5		
1/14/2008	47	37	82%	Trace	28	Y	2558	1636	450	150	472	O		
1/15/2008	40	30	61%	Trace	24	Y	2589	1652	461	151	476	O		
1/16/2008	44	32	61%	0	23	Y	2600	1640	463	157	497	O		
1/17/2008	39	34	86%	0.75	28	Y	2620	1637	458	161	525	O		
1/18/2008	49	33	88%	0	27	Y	2485	1532	441	162	512	O		
1/19/2008	42	36	72%	Trace	25	Y	2512	1573	429	161	510	O		
1/20/2008	37	20	47%	0	5	Y	2607	1638	451	163	518	O		
1/21/2008	32	18	41%	0	9	Y	2662	1677	463	164	522	O		
1/22/2008	42	26	73%	Trace	16	Y	2684	1696	471	162	517	O		

													HYPO STATUS	NOTES
DATE	HIGH	LO	HUM	PRECIP	WIND CHILL	ALERT	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	FAM UNIT	FAM PER	EXCEPT		
1/23/2008	48	31	78%	0	29	Y	2654	1676	459	163	519	O		
1/24/2008	43	28	63%	0	18	Y	2679	1706	462	165	511	O		
1/25/2008	36	22	52%	0	9	Y	2624	1650	468	164	506	O		
1/26/2008	40	29	55%	0	23	Y	2574	1588	460	159	526	O		
1/27/2008	45	30	61%	0	23	Y	2647	1641	464	167	542	O		
1/28/2008	47	33	71%	0	27	Y	2694	1687	461	168	546	O		
1/29/2008	53	33	79%	0.05	31	N	2562	1571	444	170	547	C x 2, 4, 5		
1/30/2008	56	37	79%	0.01	30	Y	2696	1690	459	170	547	O		
1/31/2008	45	28	42%	0	21	Y	2649	1645	455	171	549	O		
2/1/2008	47	35	93%	2.05	26	Y	2578	1598	431	171	549	O		
2/2/2008	51	32	81%	0	31	Y	2433	1462	411	173	560	O		
2/3/2008	57	32	85%	0	26	Y	2466	1473	435	172	558	O		
2/4/2008	55	40	82%	0.01	36	N	2530	1544	414	178	572	C x 2, 4, 5		
2/5/2008	65	41	93%	Trace	38	N	2486	1518	405	175	563	C x 2, 4, 5		
2/6/2008	74	55	80%	Trace	55	N	2522	1539	417	176	566	C x 2, 4, 5		
2/7/2008	65	41	55%	0	42	Y	2610	1615	427	175	568	O		
2/8/2008	53	36	73%	0	33	Y	2476	1498	410	175	568	O		
2/9/2008	59	39	73%	0	36	Y	2544	1519	455	174	570	O		
2/10/2008	51	24	72%	Trace	12	Y	2733	1719	444	176	570	O		
2/11/2008	32	16	41%	0	4	Y	2824	1749	500	177	575	O		
2/12/2008	34	26	69%	0.02	15	Y	2777	1756	447	177	574	O		
2/13/2008	41	32	86%	1.26	22	Y	2817	1725	513	178	579	O		
2/14/2008	44	28	72%	0	15	Y	2716	1676	463	179	577	O		
2/15/2008	58	34	75%	0	27	Y	2572	1557	437	178	578	O		
2/16/2008	47	32	57%	0	23	Y	2604	1592	436	178	576	O		
2/17/2008	51	33	93%	Trace	28	N	2586	1565	428	182	593	C x 2, 4, 5		
2/18/2008	74	45	86%	0.22	37	Y	2732	1676	444	185	612	O		
2/19/2008	50	32	56%	0	28	Y	2773	1726	448	184	599	O		
2/20/2008	36	28	85%	0.02	19	Y	2813	1750	461	185	602	O		
2/21/2008	35	21	71%	Trace	9	Y	2829	1753	457	189	619	O		
2/22/2008	36	29	95%	0.29	24	Y	2727	1672	446	187	609	O		
2/23/2008	41	35	92%	0	29	Y	2656	1624	426	186	606	O		

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DATE	HIGH	LO	HUM	PRECIP	WIND CHILL	ALERT	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	FAM UNIT	FAM PER	EXCEPT		
2/24/2008	44	29	73%	Trace	23	Y	2717	1653	452	187	612	O		
2/25/2008	51	38	75%	0	34	N	2665	1609	443	188	613	C x 2, 4, 5		
2/26/2008	54	40	93%	0.09	36	N	2691	1640	437	188	614	C x 2, 4, 5		
2/27/2008	44	29	60%	0	17	Y	2865	1788	460	189	617	O		
2/28/2008	37	22	48%	0	11	Y	2838	1772	450	190	616	O		
2/29/2008	49	25	50%	Trace	19	Y	2628	1599	418	187	611	O		
3/1/2008	52	39	60%	Trace	28	Y	2565	1548	409	186	608	O		
3/2/2008	53	31	53%	0	25	Y	2709	1640	433	195	636	O		
3/3/2008	70	38	70%	0	34	N	2570	1557	404	186	609	C x 2, 4, 5		
3/4/2008	72	55	87%	0.27	55	N	2586	1564	414	186	608	C x 2, 4, 5		
3/5/2008	64	40	89%	0.32	41	N	2657	1621	423	187	613	C x 2, 4, 5		
3/6/2008	57	37	64%	0	25	N	2617	1568	435	190	614	C x 2, 4		
3/7/2008	50	39	93%	0.59	35	N	2581	1547	415	189	619	C x 2, 4, 5		
3/8/2008	65	35	93%	0.18	20	Y	2624	1578	425	192	621	O		
3/9/2008	46	29	45%	0	17	Y	2715	1656	438	190	621	O		
3/10/2008	51	33	61%	0	27	N	2660	1621	425	191	614	C x 2, 4, 5		
3/11/2008	54	38	89%	Trace	33	N	2659	1595	442	189	622	C x 2, 4, 5		
3/12/2008	59	40	82%	0	38	N	2680	1635	417	192	628	C x 2, 4, 5		FIRE @ 13; TRANS TO 1 @ 1am
3/13/2008	62	36	69%	0	35	N	2631	1579	429	190	623	C x 2, 4, 5		13 OPEN @ 1
3/14/2008	69	44	85%	Trace	40	N	2515	1468	420	192	627	C x 2, 4, 5		13 OPEN @ 1
3/15/2008	63	49	82%	0.01	46	N	2492	1453	412	188	627	C x 2, 4, 5		13 OPEN @ 1
3/16/2008	53	43	93%	0.6	35	Y	2732	1672	433	190	627	O x 13		
3/17/2008	53	34	49%	0	25	Y	2716	1656	430	191	630	O x 13		
3/18/2008	56	44	55%	Trace	41	N	2673	1603	440	191	630	C x 2, 4, 5, 7		13 C
3/19/2008	70	51	93%	0.34	48	N	2628	1569	442	192	617	C x 2, 4, 5, 7, 11		13 C
3/20/2008	68	44	83%	0.2	36	N	2677	1628	427	192	622	C x 2, 4, 5, 7		13 C
3/21/2008	58	39	46%	0	34	N	2510	1484	405	192	621	C x 2, 4, 5, 7		13 C
3/22/2008	51	41	63%	0	34	N	2506	1473	410	193	623	C x 2, 4, 5, 7		13 C

													HYPO STATUS	NOTES
DATE	HIGH	LO	HUM	PRECIP	WIND CHILL	ALERT	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	FAM UNIT	FAM PER	EXCEPT		
3/23/2008	51	34	59%	0	27	N	2605	1562	420	193	623	C x 2, 4, 5, 7	13 C	
3/24/2008	52	37	57%	0	32	N	2677	1642	419	194	616	C x 2, 4, 5, 7	13 C	
3/25/2008	54	34	56%	0	27	N	2668	1627	419	192	622	C x 2, 4, 5, 7	13 C	
3/26/2008	71	48	42%	0	44	N	2625	1587	416	190	622	C x 2, 4, 5, 7	13 C	
3/27/2008	58	49	71%	0.01	45	N	2622	1578	422	191	622	C x 2, 4, 5, 7	13 C	
3/28/2008	74	47	82%	0	44	N	2518	1497	399	191	622	C x 2, 4, 5, 7	13 C	
3/29/2008	53	37	51%	0	28	Y	2532	1510	399	188	623	O x 13		
3/30/2008	49	35	51%	0	27	N	2577	1559	398	187	620	C x 2, 4, 5, 7	13 C	
3/31/2008	52	42	91%	0.03	39	N	2589	1565	412	188	612	C x 2, 4, 5, 7	13 C	

WARD	SHELTER	BEDS	HYP BDS	#	NOTES
WARD 1	LaCasa	90 M			
	Meridian Hill Baptist Church	30 W		13	
	Sacred Heart Church		25 M	1	
	Banneker Recreation Center	40 M			
	Girard Street	20 FU			
	Park Road	45 FU			
WARD 2	Franklin School	300 M			
	St. Aloysius McKenna Center		25 M	2	
WARD 3	Community of Christ Church		25 W	7	
	St. Luke's Church		15 M	8	
WARD 4	First Seventh Day Adventist Church		25 M	3	
	Spring Road	28 FU			
WARD 5	Adams Place	180 M			150 beds until 1/22
	New York Avenue	360 M			
WARD 6	DC General Building #9		120 M	4	144 beds until 1/24; 108 until 2/25
	DC General cafeteria (Harriet Tubman)	100 W			
	DC General Hospital Sobering Center		15 M	5	
	Drop-In Center at Federal Center Shelter	135 M	135 M	6	Hyp Nov; daily since 12/1.
	John Young	100 W			
	Madison (House of Ruth)	64 W			
	Open Door	108 W	10 W	12	
	DCGH	75 FU			Open 11/23; 36 Units until 1/16

	CCNV	85 W	85 W	9	Hyp Nov; daily since 12/1.
	Congregation Based Shelter Project	10 FU			
WARD 7	Johnson Memorial Baptist Church		25 W	10	
WARD 8	801 East Building	380 M			
	New Covenant Baptist Church		30 W	11	
	Valley Place	18 FU			