



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2022-0066, **Version:** 2

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**To:** Board of Supervisors, County of Sonoma

**Department or Agency Name(s):** Emergency Management

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Chris Godley / 565-1152

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisory District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

Sonoma County Mass Care and Shelter Annex

**Recommended Action:**

Receive and approve the new Mass Care and Shelter Annex to the County's Emergency Operations Plan.

**Executive Summary:**

The Department of Emergency Management (DEM) led the development of the proposed Mass Care and Shelter Annex, which outlines the policies, procedures, and staff roles in a Mass Care and Shelter response to a major emergency incident or disaster in the Sonoma County Operational Area. The Annex directs actions for this function in the unincorporated areas of the County and coordinates efforts of incorporated cities who maintain primary responsibility for this function within their jurisdictions. This annex supports the Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan by providing additional detail including coordinating procedures, agency responsibilities, and references specific to the emergency response function of mass care and shelter.

The Mass Care and Shelter Annex provides operational guidance on:

1. Temporary Evacuation Points
2. Sheltering: Selection, Opening, Operations, and Transition to Recovery
3. Health Care in the Shelter Environment
4. Feeding
5. Distribution of Emergency Supplies
6. Roles and Responsibilities

Development of the Annex included collaborative planning meetings with the Department of Emergency Management, the Operational Area Shelter Council, County departments and incorporates community input

received in response to the October 2017 Nuns/Tubbs wildfires and other recent disasters. The Annex incorporates both best practices as well as lessons learned from recent disasters and exercises

By approving this Annex, the Board establishes clear and consistent policies and provides County staff with direction on how care and shelter should be provided to members of the community in a major emergency or disaster.

## **Discussion:**

### Background

The 2017 wildfire response revealed big opportunities for improvement in Mass Care and Shelter. This Annex was developed after close study of the Mass Care and Shelter response to the 2017, 2019, and 2020 fires. It incorporates best practices from agencies like the Red Cross, and integrates lessons learned in previous emergencies to create a unique and equitable plan best suited to the Mass Care needs of Sonoma's diverse community.

Mass Care includes three main functions: emergency sheltering, feeding, and the distribution of emergency supplies. Emergency sheltering is the core of mass care, providing evacuees a temporary place to live and access to resources. Feeding supplies snacks and meals to displaced individuals in and out of shelters. The distribution of emergency supplies delivers key survival and recovery items - such as personal protective equipment (PPE) to residents both in and out of shelters.

The Annex centers Sheltering as the heart of Mass Care Services and creates a plan that ensures rapid, equitable, welcoming, and professional care for the whole community. The Annex directs actions for this function in the unincorporated areas of the County and coordinates efforts of incorporated cities who maintain primary responsibility for this function within their jurisdictions.

### Temporary Evacuation Points

Most Mass Care responses to an emergency will begin with Temporary Evacuation Points (TEPs). Because TEPs are quick to set up and open, they provide an almost immediate refuge for evacuees - allowing our community to get somewhere safe to regroup and plan next steps, receive information, and connect with other services such as sheltering. TEPs are a gateway to Mass Care services. They are located in places familiar and widely accessible to the community; ideally in the same place each time they open, emergency depending. Their services always include accessible restroom facilities, information in multiple languages, and may offer additional resources such as first aid, food and water.

### Sheltering

Depending on the scope and duration of the emergency, TEPs may either transition into, or direct evacuees toward emergency shelters. The Annex provides general guidance on how to select shelters, how to welcome residents into shelters, how to operate shelters safely and equitably, and how to transition them into recovery.

#### *Selection*

Shelters are usually familiar public facilities or schools. When shelter staff and the community are more familiar with a facility, each will be more comfortable in the environment. They are buildings which can accommodate large numbers of people for multiple days or weeks with sufficient space and layout to support dormitories, cafeterias, recreation spaces, and other areas. The Annex outlines shelter selection criteria, survey protocols, and facility agreements.

#### *Opening*

While a resident is staying in a shelter, it is their temporary home and the County will strive to make them feel at safe and supported. This begins with welcoming evacuees. Signage will be clearly posted, comprehensive, and in English and Spanish. Evacuees will be helped by friendly, bilingual staff. Shelter staff will collect information from residents as they enter, including any acute dietary or health needs which the shelter may address, and voluntary information which can be used to connect them to

recovery resources as early as possible. The Annex provides guidance on when and where to open shelters, and the key actions and resources required to open shelters.

### *Operations*

All shelter operations will be conducted such that those with access and functional needs and whose primary language is one other than English are warmly welcomed and accommodated. Specific guidance for shelter operations - such as cot spacing, form usage, and sign placement - is detailed in staff handbooks. The Annex provides big-picture direction for how the county will conduct sheltering.

### *Transition to Recovery*

Closing a shelter humanely is as important as its opening and operation. An emergency shelter is intended to provide temporary refuge to evacuees, and the transition from shelter back to a life upended by an emergency can be extremely challenging. Recognizing this, the Annex initiates recovery as soon as a shelter opens its doors. A new intake form developed by DEM in partnership with the Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD), and identified as a key document by the Annex, helps collect voluntary information which will be shared with recovery partners who can begin connecting residents with resources as soon as they are available. Per the Annex, COAD will be integrated as possible into shelter operations to provide immediate access to available community recovery resources.

No shelter will be closed without a minimum of 24 hours' notice posted in all relevant languages - minimally in English and Spanish - with a goal of maximizing the notice provided to residents. The Annex sets the shelter closing priorities as collecting shelter resident contact information for recovery follow-up, case management, and connecting residents with their next step in recovery.

### **Health Care in the Shelter Environment**

In 2017 health care workers and volunteers provided lifesaving care in shelter environments. This was heroic, although in ideal circumstances, this should not be necessary. The average emergency shelter is not a well-suited place for advanced medical care and critical work has been undertaken by the Department of Health Services to develop plans to ensure that evacuees who require advanced care will be treated outside of shelters. The Annex outlines the more fundamental health services which will be provided in an emergency shelter. They include:

1. 24-hour availability for the assessment and treatment of minor illnesses and injuries within the shelter
2. Referrals to more advanced healthcare providers and services
3. Replacement for prescription medication and eyewear
4. Behavioral and mental health support
5. Communicable disease controls

### **Feeding**

The Annex outlines the County's responsibility to contract for feeding services to support shelters. Meals that satisfy specific dietetic and cultural requirements will always be provided when available and practical. The first few hours of an emergency response can be extremely taxing on supply chains and logistics. Because of this, the immediate feeding priority will be to establish a meal schedule that ensures all evacuees have access to food. Quickly following this, priority will shift to food quality and cultural sensitivity. The Annex also recognizes that some mobile feeding may be required in an emergency to provide sustenance to isolated or hard-to-reach parts of the County following an emergency.

### **Distribution of Emergency Supplies**

The Annex recognizes that Distribution of Emergency Supplies (DES) may be necessary during an emergency to provide our

community with supplies and materials that are life-sustaining or support their recovery. These programs can be either mobile, or set up at a Mass Care service site. The type and amount of items distributed depend on the emergency but may include:

1. Shelf stable food
2. Water
3. Tarps
4. Cleaning supplies
5. Personal protective equipment and safety materials (N-95 masks, gloves)

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Annex organizes the agencies and organizations providing mass care into three groups: direct providers of Care and Shelter services, supporting agencies, and state and federal government agencies. It outlines the roles and responsibility of these agencies regarding care and shelter during an emergency.

#### *Providers of Care and Shelter*

The function of emergency Mass Care and Shelter is the primary responsibility of the Human Services Department (HSD) and they are the lead agency for providing care and shelter to evacuees of the unincorporated County. The Annex outlines shelter staffing, operational functions, and coordination activities for HSD and recognizes other agencies which provide direct care and shelter alongside or instead of HSD. These agencies include the Red Cross, the Department of Health Services, and City Jurisdictions - which are responsible for sheltering and caring for their own residents.

#### *Supporting Agencies*

Though the fundamentals of Mass Care and Shelter are simple, executing these services during an emergency can be a complex, regardless of the number of residents needing support. The Annex recognizes this and outlines the roles and responsibilities of County departments and other agencies which support HSD in their critical Care and Shelter Mission. These include:

1. The Shelter Council, which coordinates Shelter readiness among the Operational Area in advance of an emergency;
2. DEM, which oversees emergency responses;
3. The Office of Equity, which serves in advisory capacity to ensure all services are provided justly and equitably;
4. General Services, which provides the logistics necessary to resource shelters;
5. The Transport Authority, which provides accessible transport for the mass movement of persons to and from emergency shelters;
6. Coastal Valleys Emergency Medical Services Agency (CVEMSA), which coordinates the movement of injured and ill patients with needs exceeding the scope of care provided in shelters;
7. Community Development Commission, which will help care and advocate for pre-disaster unhoused populations during emergencies;
8. The Sheriff's Office, which will provide law enforcement at Mass Care service sites as needed and requested;
9. The Office of Education, which will assist in accessing schools for use as shelter facilities

10. COAD, which mobilizes the community to close gaps in recovery and services.

By approving this Annex, the Board establishes clear and consistent policies for Mass Care and Shelter and provides County staff with direction on how care and shelter should be provided to members of the community. This Annex provides the framework, vocabulary, tools, and procedures needed for a more rapid, effective, coordinated, and equitable care and shelter response to future emergencies. It also strives to implement the recovery process as early in the Mass Care process as possible.

Critically, this Annex also continues the County's on-going commitment to address community input and incorporate feedback provided following the 2017 wildfires and other recent disaster incidents. Specifically, the Annex provides greater guidance on how to implement additional services and protections for traditionally underserved portions of our community including improvements in language access and more direct access to non-governmental services.

**Strategic Plan:**

This item directly supports the County's Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

**Pillar:** Racial Equity and Social Justice

**Goal:** Goal 3: Ensure racial equity throughout all County policy decisions and service delivery.

**Objective:** Objective 2: Collaborate with community members and stakeholder groups to develop racial equity strategies for County emergency response, economic recovery and resiliency planning efforts.

This Annex also supports the County's 2018 Recovery and Resiliency Framework:

**Strategic Area:** Safety Net Services

**Goal 1:** Enhance core County service capacity to address long-term recovery needs and prepare for future disasters.

**Proposed Actions:** Enhance capacity to manage disaster shelters with increased training opportunities and collaboration with community volunteer partners and jurisdictions.

Develop a plan to ensure available resources and services at disaster shelter are accessible to non-English speaking and/or undocumented residents.

**Prior Board Actions:**

March 22, 2022: Adoption of the 2022 Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

Expenditures	FY 21-22 Adopted	FY22-23 Projected	FY 23-24 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>			
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>			

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

None.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

None.

**Attachments:**

1. Sonoma County Operational Area Mass Care and Shelter Annex

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

None.