

Appendix D: Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing

1969 City & County of San
Francisco Mayor Edwin M. Lee



Homelessness & Supportive Housing
Jeff Kositsky, Director

September 19, 2017

TO: Supervisor London Breed, Supervisor Jane Kim, Supervisor Aaron Peskin, members, Government Audit and Oversight Committee, Board of Supervisors

CC: John Carroll, Assistant Clerk, Government Audit and Oversight Committee, Board of Supervisors

FROM Jeff Kositsky, Director, Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH)

RE: Hearing on San Francisco's coordinated preparation and response to the record-breaking September 2017 heat wave

At the request of Supervisor Peskin, I respectfully submit answers to the questions posed in his letter dated September 12, 2017. Staff will be present at the hearing on September 20, 2017 to answer any additional questions on HSH's response to the heat wave.

The National Weather Service predicted on August 29 that San Francisco would be experiencing "severe" levels of heat September 1 - 3. What steps did HSH take to prepare for this heat wave?

- HSH's Homeless Outreach Team (SF HOT) has a warm weather protocol that is implemented anytime that temperatures are predicted to rise above 80 degrees in San Francisco. This protocol was implemented September 1 – 3 as well as the following weekend.
- On September 1, 2017 San Francisco activated the Emergency Operations Center due to the severe heat. HSH staff participated in planning calls during the evening of September 1 and throughout the weekend.
- HSH activated 3 additional SF HOT members and 4 other HSH staff/volunteers to provide assistance and outreach to people living on the streets on September 2nd since SF HOT normally has fewer staff working on the weekends.

- HSH contacted nonprofit partners on September 1st and 2nd, requesting that they prepare for the severe heat; HSH provided our nonprofit partners with contact information for HSH staff in the event they needed assistance.
- HSH staff, SF HOT members and nonprofit providers were provided basic information on dealing with severe heat, including the location of cooling centers, swimming pools (which were free on September 2nd), and open City facilities with air conditioning.
- HSH requested that Episcopal Community Services open an additional cooling center at their Next Door shelter, specifically dedicated for people experiencing homelessness.
- HSH coordinated with MTA to ensure people experiencing homelessness could secure free transportation to cooling centers if necessary.
- HSH was on stand-by to assist the Human Services Agency with staffing at cooling centers if needed and to provide special assistance to people experiencing homelessness at the centers.
- HSH's director and two deputy directors were actively involved in managing the response to the severe heat on September 2nd and 3rd. Certain HSH managers were put on stand-by in the even they were needed.

How does HSH collaborate with other City departments in an emergency plan? Does this vary given the nature of the emergency (weather, earthquake, terrorism)?

- HSH is a member of the Human Services Agency's DOC and coordinates with their staff in an emergency. HSH's main role is to deploy outreach workers to individuals experiencing homelessness, communicate, coordinate with, and assist our nonprofit partners, provide technical expertise and staffing if additional shelters are required, and to provide DSW's as needed.
- HSH also works closely with the Department of Public Health on health-related issues, coordinating transportation of people experiencing homelessness, and working to address medical concerns of people living on the streets.

Are there protocols in developing an emergency plan that are dependent on advance timing? That is, are there levels/types of planning that happen when there is a 3-day warning versus a 1-day or several hour warning?

- There are special protocols for warm, cold or rainy weather that normally is known in advance. These are managed by HSH staff in partnership with the Human Services Agency and the Department of Public Health.
- In the event of a sudden emergency such as an earthquake or terrorism, HSH participates in the Human Services Agency's DOC and takes their lead on deploying staff and other resources.
- In either case, HSH is responsible for communicating with our nonprofit partners via phone, text, and/or email. If these are not available, staff are deployed to visit sites.

Is HSH aware of DPH's "Heat Vulnerability Index", which maps vulnerable population by Census block group?

- Yes, and it is not lost on us that the locations with the highest vulnerability are also those with the largest number of homeless people. As such, HOT SF focuses their outreach in these areas during times of severe heat.

How did DSH address severe heat in its facilities, and did it coordinate with City-wide cooling stations?

- HSH contacted all providers and let them know we were available to assist. One shelter provider requested and received fans. We also suggested that providers set up cooling stations, with ice, water and fans and made them aware of the city-wide cooling stations.
- HSH was in contact with Human Services Agency staff managing the cooling stations and were on-call to provide assistance as needed. HSH outreach staff informed people they encountered of the nearest cooling station and were available to transport people as needed.

Are there protocols for communicating public safety information for the homeless and unstably housed population? Is translation into multiple languages included?

- HSH uses social media, communication with our nonprofit partners, and street outreach to reach people experiencing homelessness and those living in our facilities on a temporary or permanent basis.
- HSH has multilingual staff and access to translation services. HSH does not have easy access to written materials translated into multiple languages for each type of emergency or disaster. This is an area for improvement that we are working on and are collecting appropriate information and materials available from the CDC and other agencies for use in future emergencies.

- HSH providers outreach to people on the streets, people in temporary shelters, people living in our supportive housing, our nonprofit partners, and our staff. HSH also provides information to the general public through social media. HSH does not currently conduct outreach or provide communication beyond these groups.

Did HSH work with partner nonprofits to get safety information to homeless and unstably housed residents? Is there an "emergency information tree" that connects City departments to nonprofits that serve our most vulnerable residents?

- HSH has a protocol for communicating with our nonprofit partners in an emergency. HSH staff serve as a conduit of information and connection to other departments serving our most vulnerable residents.

As part of a 2012 CDC grant, DPH engaged in disaster planning. This was prior to the creation of HSH. How has DPH and HSH integrated HSH and the populations it serves into the disaster plan?

- HSH works closely with DPH and communicated through the EOC meetings September 1-3.
- HSH is contacted by DPH in situations when the EOC is not activated. For example, HSH was contacted the following weekend due to high temperatures. DPH led a series of conference calls throughout the weekend to coordinate our response and monitor the situation.

What kind of feedback loop and reflection is there after a disaster happens? How does HSH (with other City departments) assess response and coordination so as to improve on it next time? Is there a performance matrix that is used to measure response?

- HSH participated in calls with the EOC during the serve heat and assessed the response. HSH and DPH directors had a follow-up call to discuss the response as well. HSH staff also debriefed with staff from the Human Services Agency. All of this was discussed at a meeting of HSH's management to assess our internal response. HSH does not have its own performance matrix to measure response but identified the following areas for improvement:
 - Set up a single number/phone for an on-call manager who will coordinate the response
 - Establish a single list of contacts (staff, nonprofits, other Departments, etc.) so that the on-call manager can directly send out communications, rather than going through individual managers
 - Develop materials in multiple languages for various types of emergencies
 - Clarify contractual obligations of nonprofit providers to respond in various types of emergencies
 - Clarify HSH budget for responding to various types of emergencies

In closing, I would like to provide a summary of HSH's response to the heat emergency:

- From September 1-3, HSH staff conducted wellness checks, got people out of the sun and provided information on cooling centers and shared tips on staying safe and healthy in the heat.
- Staff distributed approximately 5,000 bottles of water to 2,500 people, most of this was done on September 2nd.
- From September 1-3, there were not individuals encountered by HSH staff who were having a medical emergency (waiting for data from Fire)
- On September 2nd, no individuals accepted offers of transport to cooling centers and there were no users at the HSH cooling center.
- Coordinated with other City departments, specifically HSA, DPH, Rec and Park, and MTA
- Coordinated response with HSH-funded nonprofit providers that operate facilities serving homeless and formerly homeless individual