

TEAM NORFOLK



Emergency Operations & Resiliency Framework

Functional Annex

Winter Overflow Warnings and Responses

August 2025

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Team Norfolk EOP Functional Annex

Updated: August 2025

Winter Overflow Warnings and Responses

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this Functional Annex is to establish a coordinated framework for Team Norfolk to support the Norfolk Community Services Board (CSB) in operating Winter Overflow shelter services for individuals experiencing homelessness during severe cold weather conditions.

When environmental conditions pose a significant risk to life and safety, such as dangerously low temperatures, wind chills, or winter storms, this annex outlines the procedures, roles, and resources necessary to provide emergency sheltering for vulnerable populations. It includes activation thresholds, shelter locations, operational guidelines, and the criteria under which the city may transition from overflow sheltering to general population sheltering.

This annex is specifically designed to safeguard the lives of single adults experiencing homelessness in Norfolk during the winter season. In situations involving families with children facing a housing crisis during Winter Overflow (WOW) activations, the Norfolk Department of Human Services (DHS) provides direct assistance. Staff or law enforcement personnel may contact DHS at the 24/7 hotline: (757) 664-6022.

BACKGROUND

Norfolk has long recognized the critical need to protect unsheltered residents during extreme winter weather. Historically, this was achieved through the Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team (NEST), a coalition of faith-based organizations that provided rotating overnight shelter services from November through April to single adults experiencing homelessness.

However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the NEST model became unsustainable due to public health concerns and operational challenges associated with shared congregate spaces. This shift prompted the City of Norfolk and the Norfolk Community Services Board (NCSB) to reevaluate sheltering strategies for vulnerable populations during cold weather emergencies.

In response, the City established The Center on Tidewater, a centralized, year-round facility offering overnight shelter and daytime services for single adults experiencing homelessness. This facility now serves as the primary location for Winter Overflow (WOW) sheltering.

To support surge capacity during severe weather events, the Huntersville Neighborhood Center (HNC) has been identified as an auxiliary daytime warming site. HNC is activated under specific conditions when additional sheltering support is needed, such as during WOW-2 or WOW-3 declarations, or when City buildings are otherwise closed due to inclement weather.

This plan, The Winter Overflow Warnings and Responses Functional Annex, formalizes the criteria, procedures, and responsibilities for activating and operating winter overflow shelters, ensuring a coordinated, compassionate, and effective response for Norfolk's most vulnerable residents during life-threatening cold weather conditions.

SITUATION

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the traditional winter sheltering model for individuals experiencing homelessness in Norfolk. Prior to the pandemic, the Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team (NEST), a coalition of local faith-based organizations, provided rotating, overnight shelter for single adults from November through April. As of this writing, NEST is no longer operating as a sheltering solution.

In response, the NCSB Homeless Outreach Team has worked with several churches individually and created a plan for those selected churches to serve as homeless shelters for two weeks at a time, from the second week of December to the end of March.

Also, the City of Norfolk has transitioned to a centralized, year-round sheltering model through The Center on Tidewater (formerly the Budget Lodge), located at 1050 Tidewater Drive. Known simply as The Center, this facility now serves as the primary access point for overnight shelter and day services for single adults experiencing homelessness who are unable to access other traditional resources. This includes the same population historically served by NEST.

The Center has a base capacity of 100 overnight beds and can expand by up to 40 additional overflow beds during winter weather conditions. This expanded capacity is designed to meet anticipated winter shelter needs without the use of supplemental hotel placements. The Norfolk Community Services Board (NCSB) Housing and Homeless Services division, in collaboration with The Center's staff, monitors guest counts closely to ensure adequate shelter availability and support for unsheltered individuals.

Additionally, the NCSB Outreach Team conducts proactive engagement with individuals experiencing homelessness to:

- Provide cold weather protection resources when available (e.g., hats, gloves, blankets)
- Share shelter availability information
- Facilitate transport or connection to services when appropriate

For coordination or questions regarding shelter access, The Center's front desk may be reached at (757) 708-4354.

RISK AND ASSUMPTIONS

This section outlines key planning assumptions and recognizes risks that inform the development of this annex.

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

The following planning assumptions guide the development and execution of this annex:

- The City of Norfolk will continue to serve as the lead coordinating entity for Winter Overflow activation, with support from Norfolk Community Services Board (CSB) and Department of Human Services (DHS).
- The Center on Tidewater will remain operational year-round as the primary sheltering facility for single adults experiencing homelessness in Norfolk.
- Huntersville Neighborhood Center will be available and functional during winter activations, barring structural or utility disruptions.
- City shelter teams will be activated per Norfolk's Emergency Shelter Staffing Protocol, with support from assigned departments on a rotating basis.
- Law enforcement and emergency medical services will remain available for response during activations.
- Partner agencies and community-based organizations may provide additional support, such as meals, volunteers, or donated supplies, but are not guaranteed resources.
- Forecasted weather data from the National Weather Service and other reliable sources will inform WOW activation decisions.
- Communication systems (e.g., Norfolk Alert, HSIN, coordination calls) will remain operational and accessible to support multi-agency coordination.

IDENTIFIED RISKS

The following risks may impact on the effectiveness or continuity of Winter Overflow shelter operations:

- Sudden or prolonged severe weather: Rapid changes in weather conditions or extended cold snaps may strain shelter capacity and resources, particularly if demand exceeds anticipated overflow thresholds.
- Limited facility availability: The Center and Huntersville Neighborhood Center are subject to infrastructure limitations, including space, utilities, and restroom/shower capacity.
- Staffing shortfalls: City departments and partner agencies may experience staffing shortages during concurrent emergencies, holidays, or widespread illness (e.g., influenza or COVID-19).

- Transportation barriers: Guests may have difficulty accessing shelter sites, especially during snow, ice, or freezing rain events. Precipitation and mobility challenges increase the need for coordinated transport.
- Behavioral health and substance use challenges: Individuals seeking shelter may present complex needs, including untreated mental illness or substance dependency, increasing the need for trauma-informed care and support services.
- Resource constraints: Supplies such as blankets, food, cold weather gear, and hygiene items may be limited if not procured in advance or replenished regularly.
- Public Health emergencies: Ongoing or future pandemics may impact shelter capacity due to distancing requirements or quarantine protocols.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

The City of Norfolk maintains a tiring, scalable approach to protecting unsheltered individuals during periods of extreme cold. This Concept of Operations outlines the procedures for decision-making, activation, coordination, operations, and demobilization of Winter Overflow (WOW) sheltering resources.

MONITORING AND READINESS

- Norfolk Emergency Management, in coordination with the National Weather Service (NWS), continuously monitors winter weather forecasts and observed conditions.
- When conditions meet or are expected to meet WOW activation thresholds, Emergency Management initiates internal readiness discussions with the Community Services Board (CSB) and Department of Human Services (DHS).
- Preparatory steps include reviewing staffing availability, resource inventories, and facility readiness at The Center on Tidewater and Huntersville Neighborhood Center (if needed).

ACTIVATION

The Director of Emergency Management (or designee) will issue an official Winter Overflow Warning (WOW) declaration based on forecasted or observed conditions.

- Upon activation:
 - Norfolk Emergency Management will issue a WOW alert via email, text, and/or Norfolk Alert to designated partners.
 - A coordination call will be scheduled to confirm operational roles, readiness, and resource assignments.
 - 911 Dispatch and Norfolk Police Department (NPD) will be notified of activation.
 - Shelter site(s) will initiate opening protocols in accordance with their respective operational guidelines.

LEVELS OF ACTIVATION

WOW declarations will align with one of the following activation levels:

- WOW-1: Overnight shelter only (weather conditions meet cold weather thresholds)
- WOW-2: Daytime and overnight sheltering (hazardous cold persists into daytime hours)
- WOW-3: Major weather event (e.g., snowstorm) requiring expanded city support and/or activation of alternate sites like Huntersville Neighborhood Center

Each level triggers specific resource deployments and operational considerations, as outlined in the WOW Conditions & Responses section.

SHELTER OPERATIONS

- During the winter months, we will first use the available churches that have signed up to accommodate the homeless. The average capacity is 50-55 individuals.
- The Center on Tidewater will then be called upon to accommodate overflow guests with additional floor accommodations. They can stretch their capacity to another 50-55 individuals.
- When needed, Huntersville Neighborhood Center will be activated to provide daytime warming shelter. Guests will be provided with a safe, heated space along with basic services such as snacks, hygiene supplies, and access to restrooms/showers.
- Facility setup and staffing will follow the Emergency Shelter Staffing Protocol, with teams rotating in 12-hour shifts.
- NPD will provide on-site security at Huntersville. General Services and Facility Maintenance will support building access, utilities, and sanitation.

RESOURCE SUPPORT

- CSB and DHS will provide cold weather supplies as available (hats, gloves, blankets, hygiene kits) and coordinate transportation when needed.
- Public Works will be tasked with clearing snow from facility entrances, sidewalks, and parking areas not on standard snow routes (e.g., Goff Street entrance to Huntersville).
- Meals and additional supplies may be coordinated through volunteer organizations, faith-based partners, or city departments as available.

COMMUNICATIONS AND COORDINATION

Norfolk Emergency Management will facilitate real-time communication between partners through:

- Coordination calls
- Situation updates via WebEOC or email
- Alert messaging systems as needed

- Shelter sites will maintain internal sign-in sheets, incident logs, and report guest counts and issues to the EOC if activated.

DEMobilization

The decision to demobilize WOW operations will be made by the Director of Emergency Management in coordination with CSB and DHS, based on improving weather conditions and shelter demand.

Once demobilized:

- Facilities will be cleaned and reset to normal operating status.
- Supplies and equipment will be inventoried and restocked as needed.
- Staff logs, guest counts, and after-action feedback will be collected.
- Norfolk Emergency Management will conduct a hotwash or debrief to identify successes and improvement areas.

WINTER OVERFLOW WARNING CRITERIA

Winter Overflow sheltering for unsheltered single adults from Norfolk should be activated based on the following cold weather conditions:

Primary Activation Threshold:

- Forecasted overnight high temperature is $\leq 30^{\circ}\text{F}$

Secondary Activation Conditions:

- Sheltering should also be considered if temperatures are forecast to be above 30°F but any of the following contributing factors are present:
- Precipitation: Damp or wet ground conditions, including rain, sleet, or snow
- Wind Chill: Sustained winds resulting in a wind chill (feels-like temperature) $< 30^{\circ}\text{F}$
- Public Health or Emergency Management Determination: Any additional concerns or extenuating circumstances, as identified by the Norfolk Department of Public Health or the Emergency Operations Team, that pose a heightened risk to life safety

Note: Wind chill reflects how cold it actually feels on exposed skin when wind is factored in. As wind speed increases, it draws heat from the body more rapidly, resulting in a lower “feels-like” temperature, even when the actual air temperature remains unchanged.

OPERATIONAL DIRECTION AND CONTROL

The decision to activate the Winter Overflow Warning (WOW) shelter at The Center on Tidewater will be based on forecasted and observed weather conditions. The Director of Emergency Management will make a WOW declaration in coordination with key city and partner agencies.

Once a WOW is declared, Norfolk Emergency Management will issue an alert notification to all relevant stakeholders. This alert will include the date, time, and access details for a coordination call, which will be convened to ensure unified operational readiness. At a minimum, the following organizations will be included in the call, with additional partners added as needed:

- Norfolk Community Services Board (NCSB)
- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Norfolk Police Department (NPD)
- Norfolk Fire-Rescue (NFR)
- Norfolk Department of Public Health
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- Department of Neighborhood Development
- Department of General Services
- Deputy City Manager (assigned to Community service Board)
- The Salvation Army
- Union Mission Ministries
- Downtown Norfolk Council (DNC)

Additionally:

- Norfolk 911 Dispatch and NPD will be notified of the activation.
- Day center guests already at The Center will be allowed to remain onsite during WOW activations and transition to overnight overflow accommodations.

LEVELS OF WINTER OVERFLOW WARNING (WOW) CONDITIONS AND RESPONSES

To ensure a scalable response, Winter Overflow Warnings are categorized into three levels based on severity and operational impact:

WOW-1: Standard Winter Overflow Activation

- Triggered when overnight weather conditions meet life-threatening thresholds for unsheltered individuals (e.g., $\leq 30^{\circ}\text{F}$ or wind chill $< 30^{\circ}\text{F}$).
- The Center will open overflow sleeping accommodations (e.g., floor mats, cots) for unsheltered single adults from Norfolk.

- Guests are not required to vacate the premises during the day and may remain onsite throughout the activation period.

WOW-2: Extended Daytime and Overnight Activation

- Triggered when hazardous winter weather conditions persist into daytime hours, in addition to overnight threats.
- The Center will provide daytime refuge and overnight overflow shelter for eligible individuals.
- Additional daytime warming opportunities may be available at public libraries, recreation centers, The Salvation Army (203 W. 19th Street), and Union Mission Ministries (5100 E. Virginia Beach Blvd).

WOW-3: Severe Winter Storm / Citywide Emergency Conditions

- Triggered by major winter weather events (e.g., snowstorm, ice storm) that may cause significant disruption to normal city operations.
- Overflow sheltering continues at The Center; however, if capacity is exceeded:
- Huntersville Recreation Center may be activated as an auxiliary shelter location.
- Activation will occur under the direction of Norfolk Emergency Management and supported by City Emergency Shelter Teams.

Condition	WOW-1	WOW-2	WOW-3
Temperature	<30°	<30°	<30°
Operations	Normal	Normal/City Closures	Local Emergency
Location	The Center	Day/Night: The Center	Day/Night: The Center and Huntersville (as needed)
Transportation	Self-Transport	Self-Transport	Self-Transport
Food	Snacks	Lunch + Snacks	Lunch + Snacks

If Huntersville is activated, essential resources, including food, water, blankets, and cots, will be supplied by Team Norfolk. Logistics and procurement will be coordinated through the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and other appropriate city departments.

HUNTERSVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER PLAN

During extreme cold weather events, The Center on Tidewater serves as the City of Norfolk's primary winter overflow sheltering site for single adults experiencing homelessness. However, in situations where conditions persist beyond overnight hours, or when additional capacity and support are required, the Huntersville Neighborhood Center (HNC) may be activated as a supplemental daytime warming facility. This section outlines the operational framework, staffing model, facility layout, and resource requirements for the use of HNC as a City-managed warming center. Activation of this site

ensures that unsheltered individuals have access to a safe, heated environment and basic support services when public facilities are otherwise closed or overwhelmed during hazardous winter conditions.

INTENT

The Huntersville Neighborhood Center (HNC), located at 830 Goff Street, serves as a city-operated warming center for unsheltered individuals during periods of extreme cold weather when other daytime shelter options are unavailable. Use of this facility is authorized by the City Manager or designee upon the recommendation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in response to conditions that present a significant risk to health and safety.

POPULATION SERVED

This site is intended to support individuals experiencing homelessness who are not currently sheltered at the designated church or The Center on Tidewater. It may also accommodate individuals found outdoors during activation periods. The expected daily population is 25–50 guests.

The Center on Tidewater will retain and accommodate its current residents (static capacity: 100), with overflow capacity for up to 50 additional guests as needed during extreme winter events.

PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT ROLES

The City of Norfolk is the lead agency for operations at HNC. Support may be provided by:

- The Norfolk Community Services Board (CSB)
- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Partner nonprofits and faith-based organizations (for food, supplies, or volunteers)

Norfolk Emergency Management will coordinate partner support through the EOC as needed.

STAFFING MODEL

HNC operations will follow the City's Emergency Shelter Staffing Protocol:

- Shelter teams are composed of 6–8 employees from various city departments.
- Each team is led by a Shelter Team Captain from DHS.
- Shifts are 12 hours, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.
- Additional guest support staffing may be provided by CSB and DHS.
- Norfolk Police Department (NPD) will assign two (2) officers to remain on-site throughout operations.
- Routine cleaning of common areas and restrooms will be performed by the City's contracted janitorial service, arranged by Norfolk Parks & Recreation.

OPERATING HOURS

- General Services will unlock and prepare the facility by 7:00 AM.
- Doors will open to the public by 8:00 AM.
- CSB will coordinate transportation for clients, if needed.
- Facility Maintenance is responsible for preparing walkways and parking areas before opening.

RESOURCES AND SUPPLIES

Items, if available, to be provided or coordinated by CSB and DHS include:

- Snacks, bottled water, coffee/tea
- Cold weather gear (hats, gloves, socks)
- Hygiene items (soap, toothpaste, hand sanitizer, etc.)
- Basic entertainment (puzzles, playing cards, etc.)
- Shower access (towels, soap) – laundry is not available

Hot lunches may be secured via community partners or purchased if donations are unavailable. CSB and DHS are responsible for obtaining small appliances (coffee makers, water kettles, etc.) as needed.

BUILDING UTILIZATION

- Guest and staff entry: Main entrance on Goff Street
- Staff parking: Lot on Tidewater Drive side
- Bus drop-off/pick-up: Directly in front of main entrance

Designated indoor spaces for guests include:

- Main Community Room
- Game Room
- Computer Room (84)
- Senior Lounge/Meeting Room (77)
- Recreation hallway restrooms
- Showers in the Recreation area (near the gym/weight room)

Staff and supply staging areas include:

- Arts and Crafts Room (83)
- Hallway outside Room #83 for food and item distribution

SECURING AND PREPARING THE SPACE

1. Facility must be opened by 7:00 AM.
2. Access to unused areas must be restricted via locked doors.

3. Two sets of facility keys (for staff restrooms, staging areas, and showers) must be distributed and returned to Facility Maintenance at closeout.
4. Showers may only be used if sufficient staffing exists for active supervision.
5. Facility Maintenance will manage alarm systems.
6. In the event of snow, Facility Maintenance will ensure access via the O'Keefe Street entrance and associated parking areas.

GUEST MANAGEMENT

1. Emergency Shelter Staff, CSB, and DHS are responsible for on-site guest services and oversight.
2. CSB will manage transportation for guests, with city resources (e.g., NPS buses) requested as needed through the EOC.
3. Drugs, alcohol, and weapons are prohibited. Bags may be searched. NPD will assist with enforcement of safety policies.
4. Guests may have complex needs (e.g., mental health conditions). CSB staff will provide trauma-informed support. No medical care is available onsite beyond basic first aid; EMS will be called for emergencies.

BUILDING-SPECIFIC DETAILS

- Entry is restricted to the Goff Street entrance.
- Only the following rooms are authorized for use during operations:
- Main Community Room
- Game Room
- Arts and Crafts Room (83) – staff/volunteers only
- Computer Room (84)
- Senior Lounge/Meeting Room (77)
- Recreation Restrooms
- Shower Area near Gym/Weight Room
- No additional rooms may be used without approval from General Services.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

HNC winter overflow operations are unfunded for:

- Department of General Services
- Norfolk Community Services Board
- Department of Human Services

Cost recovery or grant reimbursement may be explored post-event if eligible under emergency declarations.

ADDITIONAL DEPARTMENT SUPPORT (SNOW CLEARANCE)

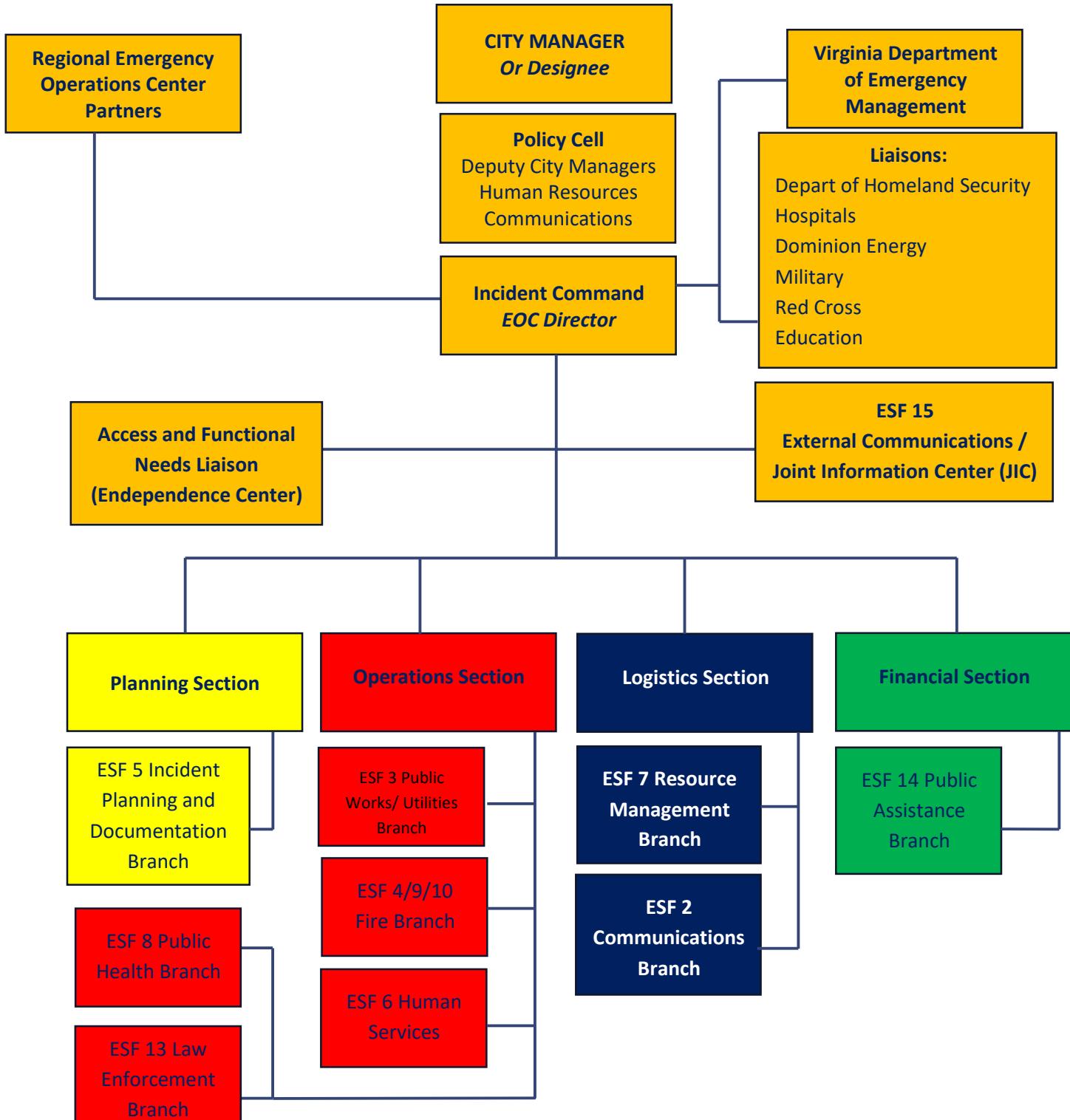
As HNC is not on a designated snow route, special coordination is required. Public Works will:

- Plow Goff Street entrance from Tidewater Drive
- Clear the rear staff entrance for employees

ORGANIZATION

With the formal adoption of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Incident Command System (ICS), and the Emergency Support Function (ESF) approach to disaster planning, the Norfolk Emergency Operations Center (EOC) utilizes a hybrid ICS and ESF structure for all incidents. Additional partners and roles can be integrated into this structure as the situation dictates.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



ACRONYMS

- WOW – Winter Overflow Warning
- CSB – Community Services Board
- DHS – Department of Human Services
- EOC – Emergency Operations Center
- HNC – Huntersville Neighborhood Center
- NCSB – Norfolk Community Services Board
- NEST – Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team
- NFR – Norfolk Fire-Rescue
- NPD – Norfolk Police Department
- NPS – Norfolk Public Schools

GLOSSARY

Community Services Board (CSB) – The local public agency responsible for mental health, developmental disability, and substance use disorder services. In this plan, CSB leads outreach and shelter support for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Daytime Warming Station – A designated indoor facility opened during daylight hours to provide relief from extreme cold conditions. Offers restrooms, heat, seating, basic refreshments, and often access to showers and hygiene supplies.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC) – A centralized coordination hub for managing emergency responses, resource requests, communications, and interagency coordination.

Huntersville Neighborhood Center (HNC) – A City-owned facility at 830 Goff Street designated as a backup daytime warming site when overflow capacity is needed beyond The Center.

Norfolk Emergency Shelter Team (NEST) – Former faith-based, rotating shelter model active prior to the COVID-19 pandemic that served single adults experiencing homelessness during the winter. No longer in operation.

Overflow Shelter – Additional shelter capacity made available beyond a facility's normal occupancy during severe weather or emergencies. Typically, includes temporary sleeping accommodations such as mats or cots.

Shelter Team Captain – A designated team leader, typically from the Department of Human Services, responsible for supervising shelter staff during a shift.

Unsheltered Individuals – Persons experiencing homelessness who are not staying in a shelter or temporary housing and are instead living in places not meant for habitation (e.g., streets, vehicles, encampments).

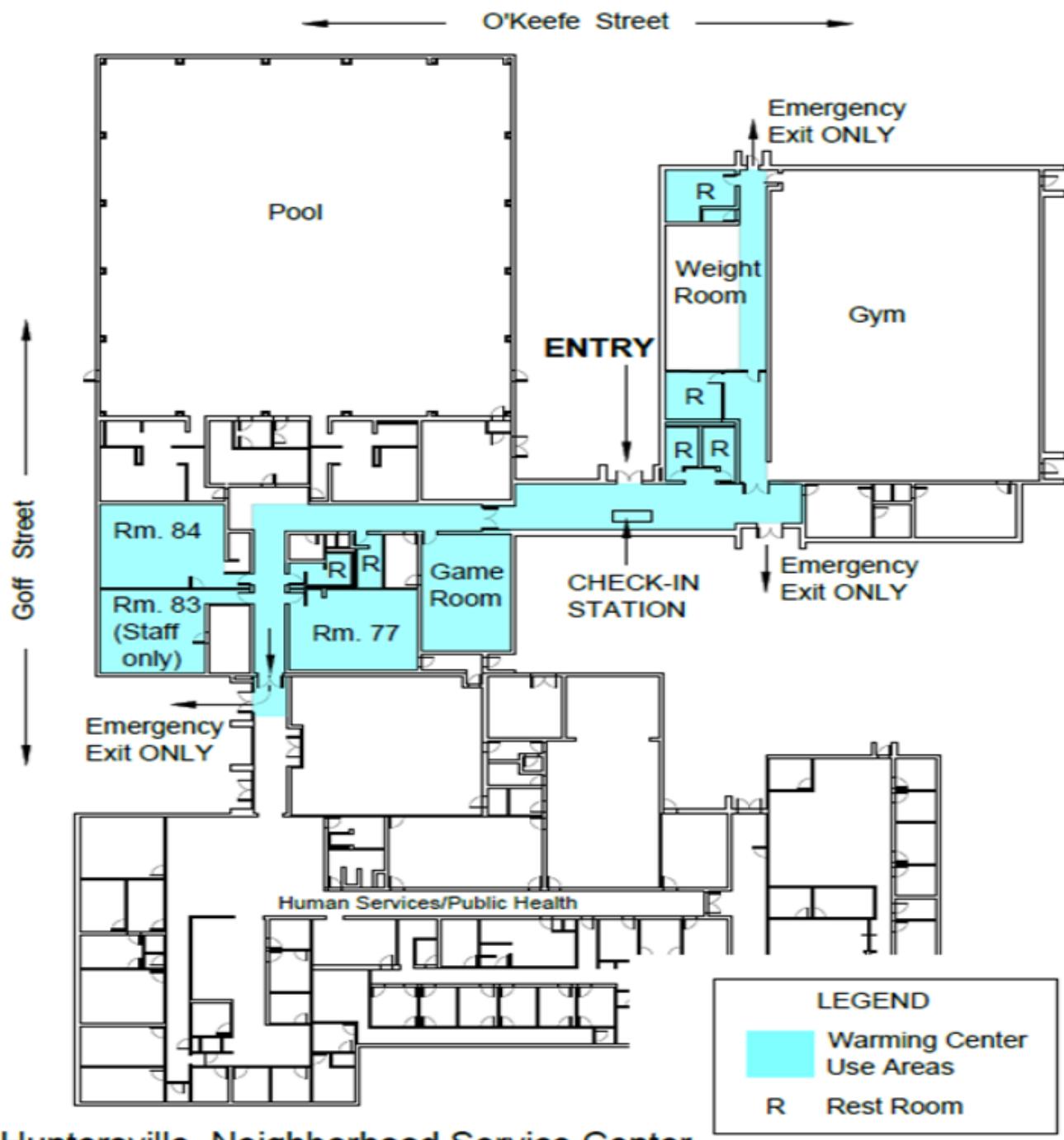
Winter Overflow Warning (WOW) – A formal declaration made by the Director of Emergency Management authorizing activation of overflow sheltering for unsheltered individuals due to cold weather risks. Levels include WOW-1 (overnight), WOW-2 (day and night), and WOW-3 (major winter storm).

Wind Chill – A measure of how cold it feels on exposed skin when the wind is factored in with air temperature. Used to determine shelter activation criteria.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Huntersville Neighborhood Center Flood Plan

APPENDIX A – HUNTERSVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER FLOOD PLAN



Huntersville Neighborhood Service Center