

DECIDING WHETHER TO EVACUATE OR SHELTER IN PLACE

Who Will Ultimately Make the Decision

Decision will be made by a decision making team consisting of Incident Manager (RN in Charge), Administrator, County of Essex, and Emergency Services.

Internal Factors

Resident acuity – do some residents, regardless of decision to shelter in place or evacuate, need to be transferred to acute care due to complex needs? A partial evacuation of these residents may need to occur.

Physical Structure

Can the Home's physical structure withstand impending or current events? The ability to withstand wind, debris impact, flooding, freezing, and remain a safe and viable shelter will impact the decision. Evacuation is necessary if it is determined the structure is unsafe or will become unsafe to provide protection.

Lay Down Factor

Determine if hazards immediately around the location, specifically trees, but also rivers, currents, etc. are likely to impact the Home.

Emergency Power Capacity

Determine if emergency power is sufficient to support critical functions, lights, air temperature in at least safe zone where residents can be congregated. The anticipated longevity will influence the evacuation decision.

Security

Security must be sufficient to protect residents, team members, and property.

Transportation

If a planned evacuation is possible, confirm that transportation commitments can be met at a specified future time or date. Also keep in mind weather and road conditions.

Destination

Considerations must be made regarding whether an exterior emergency could have also affected relocation areas prior to evacuating to next site (i.e. tornado, earthquake). The availability of relocation destinations should be confirmed in advance of planning to evacuate and may have bearing on the decision. If suitable relocation destinations are not an option, Shelter in Place may be the most logical choice.

Team Members

Team member availability may affect the decision whether to evacuate or shelter in place. Team members should be contacted to determine availability for shelter in place and also to determine whether they can move with residents to a relocation destination.

Supplies

A decision to shelter in place requires the Home to be self-sufficient, including whether deliveries of essentials is likely. Adequate quantities of:

- Alternate energy sources

- Potable water (6 litres/resident/day)
- Medications
- Hygiene supplies

If sufficient quantities are not available or accessible, evacuation may be necessary. It is also important to determine that a destination has adequate supplies.

Hazard Assessment

The Incident Manager (RN in Charge) or designate should determine the immediacy of the threat to residents and team members and the likely scope of the emergency. The Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment will weigh the relative risks of sheltering in place vs. evacuating.

The Nature of the Emergency will affect the Decision

- 1) Time – Immediate threat vs. impending threat
- 2) Scope – Location-specific vs. community-wide

Immediate emergency events (i.e. fire, gas leak, structural collapse) allow for very little planning and response is often reactive and based on training. The resident population may evacuate initially from one part of the building to another, or from the building to an outdoor staging area. Immediate emergencies may necessitate: moving temporarily to a different part of the building or moving to a temporary triage centre or community resource until permanent arrangements are made.

Impending disasters (tornado, winter storm) are tracked prior to impact and allow for decisions to be made involving local emergency operations while weighing the options.

There may also be time to consider when a decision must be made to safely evacuate, and to make all the facts available to make the decision. Considerations are: estimated arrival time of weather event; time required to mobilize and transport residents.

Decisions to Shelter in Place or Evacuate Should also consider:

- The estimated time before return to the Home if evacuation is chosen
- Whether the emergency event is within the building only or widespread
- The resources available within the community

The Incident Manager (RN in Charge) or designate should be prepared to address all points above when providing input to the Decision Making Team in deciding whether to shelter in place or evacuate.