

Town of Vassalboro
Maine



Vassalboro Community School Warming or Cooling Center Guidelines
Updated 12/11/2024

During extreme temperature conditions when normal coping mechanisms in the home are ineffective or unavailable, the Town of Vassalboro is poised to open the Vassalboro Community School as a Warming or Cooling Center for Vassalboro residents.

In the event of a large-scale emergency, or when a heat or cold-related emergency persists or is predicted to persist beyond the operational hours of the Center, and it's not safe for individuals to return to their homes, a shelter might need to be opened.

A Warming or Cooling Center is a temporary facility that is made available during extreme temperatures. At the discretion of the Town Manager in conjunction with the Superintendent of Schools, the Center can be opened to provide public information, food, showers, charging stations for electronic devices and powering medical equipment. When operating as a Warming or Cooling Center, this facility is not an overnight shelter or homeless shelter. The Center is open for a limited number of hours for a limited number of days and provided limited services. This is not a daycare for children, the elderly, or others who cannot care for themselves. It is assumed that individuals who use the Center can return to their homes when the Center is closed.

Power outages that render heating and cooling systems inoperable as well as the wind chill and heat index as indicated by the National Weather Service will be considered when opening a Warming or Cooling Center.

If a heat or cold emergency persists or is predicted to persist beyond the operational hours of the Center, and it is not safe for individuals to return to their homes, a shelter might need to be opened. If a shelter is being considered, Center registration personnel should poll the Center guests to determine who will be able to return to their homes safely and who will require overnight sheltering. If the Town Manager has chosen to operate as an American Red Cross Shelter, he/she will contact the American Red Cross.

Before an Incident

The Town Manager will review weather forecasts and any reports submitted by federal, state, county and local agencies. The Town Manager will contact the Superintendent of Schools to discuss the possibility of opening the center/shelter.

In conjunction with the Superintendent, the Town Manager will determine personnel needed that will include registration workers, custodians, volunteer manager, safety officer, first aid/CPR/AED providers and food servers. The Town Manager serves as the Center Manager and Public Information Officer.

As the Center Manager he/she will also determine potential facilities at the school for lavatories, electrical outlets, large common area, registration area, rooms for specialized purposes (first aid, nursing, play, etc.), accommodations for pets and food service. In addition, the Town Manager will determine the equipment, supplies and forms that are necessary.

During an Incident

During the initial assessment, the Town Manager will consult with the Superintendent of Schools, the National Weather Service, Maine Emergency Management Agency, and any utility companies prior to an event. A review of temperatures to be expected, number of phone calls from the public, demographics expected and services that will be needed.

The Town Manager will activate paid and volunteer staff. Equipment and supplies will be brought to the facility if not already on site. The Vassalboro Selectboard, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Maine Emergency Management Agency and Kennebec County Emergency Management Agency will be notified regarding Warming and Cooling Center activation. When activating the shelter, the American Red Cross will be notified.

Areas will be set up for the following: registration, common, dining, information, entertainment, play, quiet and pets. Off-limit areas will be determined, signage posted, note any existing damage, mitigate any hazards, brief staff and ensure all staff are assigned and trained according to their capabilities. When the center is operational MEMA will be contacted as well as posting on the Town's website and social media.

During operations volunteers will require visitors to complete a registration form, mitigate health and safety hazards and ask everyone to report unsafe conditions. All staff hours and expenses will be documented, shift and break schedules will be established ensuring no one works past the maximum number of hours. No fewer than two workers will be allowed during each shift. Ongoing operations will also ensure that an activity log is maintained, reports are completed for each incident of illness or injury to staff and guests, snacks and water are always available and determination whether meals will be served. A daily census will be reported to the County Emergency Management Agency.

Closing

Give notice of closing as soon as possible, preferably 24-hours. Notify employees and volunteers, guests Offices of Emergency Management (Municipal & County), website and social media.

Ensure that all guests have transportation to their residence, remove outdoor signage, ensure equipment is clean and good working order before storing, repair or replace damaged equipment and/or signage, replenish supplies, ensure the facility is returned to its pre-activation condition or better, inspect facility with Superintendent or designee and document any concerns, debrief staff and guests and collect and file paperwork.

Conduct an after-action meeting with school officials and determine successes, shortfalls and suggestions for improvement. Write an improvement plan with individuals assigned to ensure that suggested improvements are implemented and the put new procedures into place for the next Center as needed.