



Town of Mahone Bay
Standard Operating Procedures For:

Mahone Bay Comfort Station
41 Hawthorn Road, Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia B0J 2E0

OVERVIEW

The [Lunenburg County Regional Emergency Management Organization \(REMO\)](#) has an existing policy and guidelines in place for the operation of Comfort Centres. This document is to set procedures for the volunteer/community group that will operate a Comfort Centre at 41 Hawthorn Road, Mahone Bay, commonly known as the Mahone Bay & District Fire Department.

Comfort Centre Overview

- What is a Comfort Centre?
 - A Comfort Centre is a facility for residents who are staying in their homes during an emergency, but do not have full services such as electricity, heat, and water. Examples of this in Nova Scotia are hurricanes and blizzards that caused long power outages.
 - Comfort Centres are meant to be a place to go to get warm or cool off, charge devices, get light refreshment, get information, and use washrooms and sometimes showers. Comfort Centres are **not** a place to stay overnight.
- When do Comfort Centres open?
 - International standard is that residents prepare for 72 hours during an emergency. A general rule is for Comfort Centres to open 72 hours after an occurrence. Sometimes, the Comfort Centres will open early.
- Who decides to open the Comfort Centre?
 - The Chief Administrative Officer, or designate, makes the final decision to open and close the Comfort Centre.
- What amenities are required during Comfort Centre operations?
 - Heating or cooling
 - Electricity (generator)
 - Washrooms and sometimes showers
 - Light refreshments
 - Place to charge devices
 - Updated information if possible.
- What are the hours of operation of the Comfort Centre?
 - 8:00am to 8:00pm (can be amended based on the circumstances)

Volunteer Group Composition

The Comfort Centre will be operated by a group of individuals on a volunteer basis.

- There should be at least 10 volunteers to allow for at least two, 6-hour shifts of 5 people during Comfort Centre hours. Sometimes shifts will be shorter with fewer people. There should also be some volunteers with on-call availability in case more than the 10 core volunteers are needed.
- At a minimum, the Comfort Centre must have two volunteers in the building at all times for safety.

- The group should choose a Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager and Alternate. One of these people must be at the Comfort Centre at all times the Comfort Centre is open.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager
 - Ensure all the procedures during the activation and deactivation of the Comfort Centre are complete
 - Volunteer Manager or Alternate must be present during all hours the Comfort Centre is open
 - Maintain, and share with the Town, an inventory of volunteers including contact information and necessary credentials
 - Help in volunteer recruitment
 - Organize and give roles, responsibilities, and schedules to volunteers
 - Ensure all amenities of the Comfort Centre are at a good standard at all times
 - Request the activation and deactivation of the Comfort Centre from the Chief Administrative Officer (Deputy CAO in their absence) when needed.
 - Be the main point of contact with Lunenburg REMO, Town of Mahone Bay, and Mahone Bay & District Fire Department regarding Comfort Centre activations and deactivations
 - Provide any debriefing, reporting, or communication with the Lunenburg REMO and Town of Mahone Bay as requested
 - Ensure volunteers have valid credentials including, but not limited to, when necessary:
 - Food handling
 - Criminal record and vulnerable sector check
 - Purchase supplies and understand the allowable spending limits

During larger emergencies, the Red Cross may take over operations or use the Comfort Centre as an Emergency Shelter. In those instances, the Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager will become a volunteer and liaison with Red Cross.

- Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager Alternate
 - Volunteer Manager or Alternate must be present during all hours the Comfort Centre is activated
 - Act in the role of the Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager in their absence or inability to perform the duties
- All Comfort Centre Volunteers
 - Be available to support residents during times of Comfort Centre activation, which includes but is not limited to:
 - Providing information to residents or telling them who to contact

- Making and giving light refreshments (food handling if required)
 - Making sure the Comfort Centre is clean during hours of activation
 - Obtain Criminal and Vulnerable Sector Checks and submit to the Volunteer Manager
 - Other duties as assigned by the Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager
- Participate in training or licensing requirements, briefings, and debriefings
- Chief Administrative Officer or Deputy CAO as delegated
 - Approve or Deny request to activate the Comfort Centre
 - Coordinate with Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager
- Town Public Works Department and Mahone Bay & District Fire Department
 - Maintain a good working order of facilities to allow for short notice activation and deactivation of a Comfort Centre
 - Open the facility when requested in a timely manner
- Lunenburg County REMO
 - Act as a general resource for all Emergency Management activities and provide necessary information and resources to the Comfort Centre as applicable.

Activation/Deactivation Procedure

- The activation and deactivation of the Comfort Centre can be done in three circumstances:
 1. On the recommendation of the Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager with approval of the Chief Administrative Officer
 2. On the recommendation of the Lunenburg Regional Emergency Management Organization with the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer
 3. On the request of the Chief Administrative Officer

The following is the procedure for activating the Comfort Centre.

Prior to Activation

- The Chief Administrative Officer will notify Lunenburg REMO, and the Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager, and the Mahone Bay & District Fire Chief of the activation of the Comfort Centre with the time it will open.
- The Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager will notify the Alternate and volunteers of the activation and request at least 2 volunteers report to the Fire Station for preparation.
- The Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager will organize the remaining volunteers for the anticipated time the Comfort Centre will be activated. Volunteers should not be asked to be present for more than 6 hours at a time. Ideally, volunteers will be scheduled for 4-hour time slots.
- The Preparation Volunteers
 - Turn on the heat/cooling and any other necessary equipment
 - Set up necessary signage, tables and chairs

- Prepare any refreshments
- Check the Comfort Centre to make sure it is clean and has supplies. If supplies are needed after regular Town Hall business hours, they can be later expensed to the Town of Mahone Bay. During business hours, if available, cash or credit may be accessed for purchases. Purchases must be approved by the Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager or Alternate and shall not exceed \$500 per comfort centre activation without the approval of the CAO or Deputy CAO.

During Activation

- The Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager will assign roles to volunteers including but not limited to:
 - Greeter/people counter
 - Refreshment attendants
 - General clean up and supply watch
 - Floaters
- One volunteer should be posted at the front door at all times to welcome visitors and track the number of people using the Comfort Centre.
- The Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager will keep up to date on current information and tell volunteers the updates as needed.
- Volunteers will re-stock supplies and refreshments.
- Volunteers must tell the Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager if they are leaving or reporting for volunteer duties.

Daily Closure

- Tell visitors that the Comfort Centre will be closing 30 minutes in advance.
- When the Comfort Centre is closed, make sure all visitors have left.
- Lock the Doors
- Do the last cleaning including:
 - Cleaning dishes and kitchen
 - Remove any garbage from tables
 - Pack up any leftover food and drink
 - Sweep and mop
 - Check and restock supplies
 - Clean washrooms and showers (if regular cleaners are not available)
 - Take out any garbage, recycling, and compost
- Give the Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager a list of needed supplies. The Manager will ask a volunteer to shop or do it themselves.
- Make sure everything that should be turned off or unplugged is and that heat/cooling are set for the night.
- The Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager may dismiss volunteers at their discretion, but there shall never be any volunteer in the facility alone.

Overall Deactivation (End of Event)

- The Chief Administrative Officer or Deputy will notify Lunenburg REMO, the Comfort Centre Volunteer Manager, and the Mahone Bay & District Fire Chief of the deactivation of the Comfort Centre with the time it will close.
- Complete all tasks outlined in the Daily Closure Checklist

Post Deactivation

Be prepared for a debrief session.