



# Appendix C

## **Tacoma Housing Authority's Planning Who to Serve with What Services during Large Scale Public Emergencies: GUIDELINES**

### **THA's Emergency Operations Committee**

*Last Revised April 16, 2020*

#### **SUMMARY**

During large scale public emergencies, THA will focus its response on its core mission and responsibilities as follows:

- keep its tenant and voucher clients housed and safe; this means protecting its portfolio and paying THA's share of the rent to voucher landlord partners;
- preserve THA's capacity to continue this core function beyond the emergency;
- keep THA's staff safe and working effectively for these purposes.

THA tenants and voucher clients may also have non-housing needs during an emergency: e.g., food, medicine; health care. The larger community may also need a lot more housing and non-housing help.

THA will have to make hard judgments whether and how THA can help meet these needs. THA will make these judgments in any particular emergency using its comprehensive emergency response and recovery plan. The Guidelines below will help THA make those judgments. They are guidelines only because each emergency will offer unique challenges and chances for THA to be useful. As a general guideline, whether THA can assist clients with non-housing needs or can extend even its housing resources to still others will depend on factors that will vary with the emergency. These factors include:

- the scale and nature of the emergency;
- the scale and nature of the need;
- THA's capacity to respond;
- whether THA can address other needs without risking its core function to house people;
- the availability of other community resources.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING WHAT THA'S, IN AN EMERGENCY, CAN AND CANNOT DO FOR CLIENTS AND OTHERS**

Below are eight guidelines to help determine what THA will try to do for its clients and others in an emergency and what it will not try to do. These guidelines begin with THA's core function. Understanding what this core mission is begins with THA's Mission Statement:

*THA provides high quality, stable and sustainable housing and supportive services to people in need. It does this in ways that help them prosper and help our communities become safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive and just.*

The core of this mission is to house people in need. This will not change in an emergency; indeed, an emergency will likely reinforce its importance. In contrast, the nature and challenges of an emergency are harder to predict. A particular emergency will determine whether, to what extent and how THA can even serve its core mission, and whether it has any remaining capacity to do more than that. That is why these are guidelines only.

	GUIDELINE FOR THA EMERGENCY RESPONSE	Operational Details When Conditions Permit
1.	<p><b>Compliance with Orders of the Civil Authorities</b> THA will comply with orders of civil authorities.</p> <p>NOTE: The importance of THA’s core housing mission means that civil authorities in an emergency will likely designate THA and its operations as an “essential” activity exempt from shut-down orders</p>	
2.	<p><b>THA’s Core Function: To House People in Need</b> The first priority of THA’s emergency response will preserve its ability to perform its core function to house people in need. THA’s emergency response will focus on doing this. This focus will also strengthen the larger community’s emergency response because an emergency will likely increase its need for the housing THA provides.</p> <p>THA houses people in three ways. Its emergency response will protect THA’s ability to do each of these during the emergency, and beyond. <b>First</b>, THA rents housing to tenants. It has a large and varied portfolio of residential properties for this purpose. THA manages most of it directly. Third-party managers manage the rest of it. THA has important responsibilities for the safety and wellbeing of all its tenants. It also has an owner’s responsibility to its investors, lenders and neighbors for the condition of the portfolio.</p> <p><b>Second</b>, THA pays the rent on client’s behalf to landlords in tenant and project based assistance. This is the main way THA houses its clients. These clients and their landlords depend on this assistance. Since THA is <b>not</b> the landlord, it is not responsible for the rental property. THA’s main responsibility is to pay THA’s share of the rent.</p> <p><b>Third</b>, THA funds the county’s rapid rehousing program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● staff the EOC</li> <li>● identify essential staff</li>   <li>● keep them safe, paid, and working</li>   <li>● equip them for the work</li> <li>● maintain and protect portfolio</li> <li>● pay landlords</li> <li>● pay rapid rehousing programs</li> <li>● pay vendors</li> <li>● process hardship applications</li> <li>● fill vacancies; issue vouchers</li> <li>● collect rent</li> <li>● delay or waive rent or fees</li>   <li>● evict tenants who threaten safety or health with a soft landing someplace else</li>   <li>● communication with clients, landlords and community <i>SEE CONSULTATION &amp; COMMUNICATON SECTION BELOW</i></li> </ul>

	<b>GUIDELINE FOR THA EMERGENCY RESPONSE</b>	<b>Operational Details When Conditions Permit</b>
3.	<p><b>THA Staff Necessary to Perform that Core Mission</b>            To do this work, THA employs around 140 dedicated and talented people. Their safety and wellbeing will be an important focus of any THA emergency response. This focus serves three purposes. <b>First</b>, THA has important employer responsibilities for their welfare. <b>Second</b>, the effectiveness of THA’s emergency response depends on a functioning staff. <b>Third</b>, THA needs to keep its staff to ensure THA’s functioning after the emergency is over.</p> <p>Yet, THA may have a reduced work force. Some may be sick or injured. Some will not be able to get to work or work on site safely. Some will have to care for their families or in other ways attend to their own personal needs first. Civil authorities may order them to stay home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● keep staff safe, paid, and working</li> <li>● flexible work schedules and assignments as necessary for family responsibilities</li> <li>● help staff manage stress</li> <li>● appreciate staff</li> <li>● communication with staff about the emergency plan and their role in it.</li> </ul> <p><i>SEE CONSULTATION &amp; COMMUNICATION SECTION BELOW</i></p>

	<b>GUIDELINE FOR THA EMERGENCY RESPONSE</b>	<b>Operational Details When Conditions Permit</b>
4.	<p><b>Non-Housing Needs of Clients</b>            THA’s clients come in two general types: tenants of THA, and voucher holders who rent from someone else and on whose behalf THA pays a portion of the rent. These clients show a variety of needs and capacities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● elderly</li> <li>● persons with disabilities</li> <li>● families with minor children</li> <li>● people living in buildings with elevators</li> <li>● very low-incomes and very little assets</li> <li>● limited English proficiency</li> </ul> <p>In normal times, these clients also have other needs beyond housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● food</li> <li>● access to prescription medicine</li> <li>● behavioral health services</li> <li>● childcare</li> </ul> <p>THA’s ability to address these non-housing needs is limited even in normal times. THA’s housing requires its tenants to live independently. THA provides only a “light touch” of supportive services. For other services, THA’s main role is to refer clients to the services of other organizations, and to facilitate those services. THA expects its tenants to prepare their own households for emergencies. THA helps them do that with training. THA has an even more limited ability to address these needs among its voucher holders. They are harder for THA to serve in these ways because they are more numerous and scattered throughout the city.</p> <p>In an emergency, these non-housing needs may worsen to also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● stress</li> <li>● loneliness</li> <li>● need for welfare checks</li> </ul> <p>THA’s ability to address these non-housing needs during an emergency may get weaker still. Its ability to address them will depend on the particulars and scale of the emergency, the scale of the need, and THA’s own capacity to focus on work beyond its core housing function.</p> <p>To the extent THA can focus on these non-housing needs, it will likely continue its dependence on referrals and partnerships with other organizations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● assess client needs</li> <li>● inventory available service resources and partners</li> <li>● solicit services and assess offers of services from other organizations, and organize and facilitate their work</li> <li>● facilitate and organize service offers we accept</li> <li>● “assess and refer” clients to services</li> <li>● field phone calls and emails from clients</li> <li>● communication with clients and community partners  <i>SEE CONSULTATION &amp; COMMUNICATION SECTION BELOW</i></li> </ul>

	<b>GUIDELINE FOR THA EMERGENCY RESPONSE</b>	<b>Operational Details When Conditions Permit</b>
5.	<p><b>OUT OF SCOPE SERVICES</b>            Although emergencies will have an uncertain effect on both need and THA’s capacity, some service needs are not ever likely to fit in THA’s emergency response. Here is a sampling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● provide social work consultations or behavioral healthcare</li> <li>● directly provide needs such as food, medication or caregivers</li> <li>● directly provide transportation</li>   <li>● provide generators or temporary utilities in damaged units. People need to activate their personal alternate shelter option or remove to a red cross shelter</li>   <li>● run errands or care for pets</li> <li>● intervene in neighbor disputes (referral to appropriate agency)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● robust communication with clients</li> </ul> <p><i>SEE CONSULTATION &amp; COMMUNICATION SECTION BELOW.</i></p>
6.	<p><b>CONSULTATION &amp; COMMUNICATION WITH CLIENTS AND PARTNERS</b>            THA’s emergency response needs to incorporate robust consultation and communication with clients and partners. This is essential for several purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● make THA smarter about client needs and THA choices on how to respond; safeguard against prejudgments or exclusion of people who because of race, language or poverty are often left out even in normal times.</li>   <li>● enlist clients to help themselves, neighbors or THA</li> <li>● reassure clients and voucher landlords that THA is “on the case”</li> <li>● tell clients what THA can offer and cannot offer</li> <li>● tell clients about services from other places and how to get at them</li> <li>● dispel false expectations about what THA can do.</li>   <li>● consider services offered from partners or solicit those services; coordinate their efforts; accept or politely decline offers with a view to forming or strengthening the partnership for the future.</li> </ul>	<p>As conditions permit, THA will consult with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● THA TRAC (Tacoma Residents Action Council);</li>   <li>● Landlord Advisory Group;</li>   <li>● Northwest Justice Project and other “proxy” voices for clients;</li> </ul> <p>Communication includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● a lot of signage in the portfolio;</li> <li>● regular emails and letters;</li>   <li>● THA web site and social media;</li> </ul> <p>All communication shall be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● clear;</li> <li>● at appropriate grade level;</li> <li>● in appropriate languages;</li> <li>● reassuring as possible.</li> </ul>
7.	<p><b>THA’s SERVICE TO OTHERS AND THE LARGER COMMUNITY</b>            THA seeks to house more people. It is dedicated generally to the needs of the Tacoma community and protecting its well-being. In normal times, THA is alert for ways to do that. In an emergency, when those needs are likely to grow, THA will remain alert for how it can help.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● communication with the City and County, and community partners.</li> </ul> <p><i>SEE CONSULTATION &amp; COMMUNICATION SECTION ABOVE.</i></p>

	<b>GUIDELINE FOR THA EMERGENCY RESPONSE</b>	<b>Operational Details When Conditions Permit</b>
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>FLEXIBILITY AND CREATIVITY</b>  An emergency will present new challenges. It may present some new chances for THA to be useful in ways hard to anticipate. THA must remain flexible and creative. It will need to ask not what it was designed to do, but what it can do that would be useful.</p>	