



Legislation Text

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Clerk 07/21/2022

A MOTION requesting that the executive develop a regional operational plan for extreme weather centers and disaster sheltering, with a special focus on the most-vulnerable King County residents.

WHEREAS, as reported in the most-recent National Climate Assessment, climate change is expected to result in more frequent and intense extreme weather events, and

WHEREAS, people who are already vulnerable, including lower-income and homeless residents have lower capacity to prepare for and cope with extreme weather and climate-related events and are expected to experience greater impacts in coming years, and

WHEREAS, in 2018, the department of public health published the Blueprint for Addressing Climate Change and Health, which describes the core functions and strategies for public health to address climate change and health, and

WHEREAS, according to the department of public health, heat-related health risks in King County are exacerbated by existing inequities in housing, access to healthcare and health outcomes, and

WHEREAS, in 2021 King County completed a heat-mapping project that quantifies the harmful, inequitable impact that hotter summers are having on the region. The data show that surface-level temperatures in areas with paved landscapes, less tree canopy and more industrial activity are substantially higher during summer heat events compared to less-urbanized areas, and

WHEREAS, heat-related health risks in King County are exacerbated by existing inequities in housing, access to healthcare and health outcomes. Those most at risk are older adults, the very young, pregnant

women, people who work outdoors, people who are unhoused and people who have chronic medical conditions. Many of the areas affected by higher temperatures have a higher proportion of BIPOC residents and have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and other health inequities.

WHEREAS, according to the department of public health, hotter temperatures increase the risk of illness and death from heatstroke and cardiovascular disease, and

WHEREAS, researchers at the University of Washington found an increase in emergency medical service calls, hospitalizations and mortality in King County during hotter temperatures, and

WHEREAS, record heat waves can be extremely dangerous in areas such as the Pacific Northwest with historically cooler climates because people are less likely to have access to air conditioning, and

WHEREAS, according to 2019 data from the United States Census Bureau's American Housing Survey, Seattle is the least air-conditioned metropolitan area included in the survey. As of 2019, only forty-four and one-quarter percent of households in Seattle metropolitan area were cooled by central air or a room unit. Only thirty-four and seven-tenths percent of those households with incomes less than thirty thousand dollars have air conditioning, and

WHEREAS, according to the department of public health, the record-setting heat dome event in June 2021 caused thirty-three deaths from hyperthermia in King County, and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, access to a cool environment during an extreme heat event can help residents avoid heat illness, and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports exposure to air pollutants in wildfire smoke can irritate the lungs, cause inflammation, alter immune function and increase susceptibility to respiratory infections, likely including COVID-19, and

WHEREAS, the nationally accredited King County emergency management program fosters collaborative and cooperative planning at all levels to enable a uniform and rational approach to the coordination of multiagency and multijurisdictional actions for all regional mitigation, preparedness, response

and recovery efforts. On behalf of the executive, the King County office of emergency management has broad responsibility to perform coordination activities for county government agencies, cities and other appropriate agencies, and to provide liaison with other governments and the private, nongovernmental sector, for emergencies and disasters, and

WHEREAS, the King County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan contains elements that address mitigation activities, preparedness, responses to disasters and emergencies and recovery operations, including mass care disaster sheltering and other related assistance, and

WHEREAS, the King County office of emergency management coordinates with and has initiated a planning process with county agencies, the cities and other interested parties to develop a regional extreme weather center and disaster sheltering plan, to include the use of cooling, warming and clean air centers, and

WHEREAS, the department of local services has started the process to identify community partners and volunteers to operate and staff extreme weather centers and disaster shelters in unincorporated King County, and

WHEREAS, the 2020 version of the King County Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan ("the RHMP"), adopted by the county council with Motion 19160, and by nearly fifty of the cities and special purpose districts as well as the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and which integrates with the Strategic Climate Action Plan ("the SCAP"), contains extreme weather as one of the fourteen highest risk hazards confronting the region. The RHMP details the risk for, vulnerabilities to and consequences of extreme weather events and sets forth strategies, projects and programs through which vulnerability to and impacts from extreme cold, extreme heat and wildfire smoke are reduced and abated, and

WHEREAS, planning for extreme weather events and other events requires significant coordination with the King County Regional Homelessness Authority, which has responsibility for unhoused people throughout the county, the cities for their residents and visitors, the tribes for their residents and visitors, the county for unincorporated residents and visitors the state for residents of long-term care facilities and family

care homes, and

WHEREAS, extreme cold can have a disproportionate impact on those who are experiencing homelessness or who are financially unstable and unable to pay utility bills, and can cause power outages, which can lead to the inability to safely heat homes, and

WHEREAS, in 2012, King County adopted its first SCAP, becoming one of the first local jurisdictions in the nation to comprehensively plan to address the threats of climate change. The emphases in the SCAP have included: requiring county agencies to limit greenhouse gas emissions associated with agency operations; encouraging and supporting efforts to limit emissions by the regional community; and preparing to mitigate the impacts of climate change, particularly as they affect vulnerable populations. The county council adopted the 2020 SCAP in 2021 with Motion 15866, and

WHEREAS, as part of the SCAP, King County is beginning work on a strategic plan to mitigate the impacts of higher temperatures on communities in King County, with an emphasis on low-income neighborhoods, communities of color and other vulnerable communities in King County that experience a confluence of multiple inequities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

The council requests the executive to:

A. Coordinate across King County agencies, cities, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority, the state and other partners to develop a regional operational plan for extreme weather centers and disaster sheltering, with a special focus on the most-vulnerable residents. For the purposes of this section A., "the most-vulnerable residents" shall include, but are not limited to, unhoused people, low-income people who live in housing without adequate protection from extreme weather and senior citizens or those with disabilities without adequate protection from extreme weather. In developing the operational plan, the executive shall:

1. Conduct community outreach in low-income communities in unincorporated King County to gather information on the location and features that would result in the highest utilization of extreme weather centers

and disaster shelters during extreme weather and other disasters;

2. Encourage the cities to conduct outreach in low-income communities within their jurisdictions, to gather information on locations and features that would result in the highest utilization of extreme weather centers and disaster shelters during extreme weather and other disasters;

3. Encourage the Regional Homelessness Authority to conduct outreach in unhoused communities throughout the county, to gather information on locations and features that would result in the highest utilization of extreme weather centers and disaster shelters during extreme weather and other disasters. Any locations identified to serve unhoused individuals shall strive to allow unhoused people to bring their personal belongings;

4. Consolidate the information gathered by the cities and the Regional Homelessness Authority with the information gathered through the county's outreach efforts in unincorporated King County. Based on that information, the executive shall also coordinate with the Regional Homelessness Authority and appropriate county, city, state, federal and tribal agencies as well as community partners and private sector businesses to identify facilities that could serve as extreme weather centers or disaster shelters;

5. Based on the facilities identified in subsection 4 of this section A, provide a list and a map of King County facilities currently used for extreme weather centers or disaster sheltering or that could be rapidly repurposed to serve as extreme weather centers and disaster shelters with an emphasis on those facilities that can be available to residents of unincorporated King County or residents of cities that do not have access to similar facilities in their own cities. That information should also include staffing costs based upon the staffing model developed in subsection 8 of this section A;

6. Based on the facilities identified in subsection 4 of this section A, provide a list and a map of King County facilities not currently used for extreme weather centers and disaster shelters, but that could be used for such purposes with upgrades. For a range of scenarios, the executive shall also identify the costs of such upgrades and staffing costs;

7. Based on the facilities identified in subsection 4 of this section A, provide a list and a map of non-county owned facilities that could be used for extreme weather centers and disaster shelters. The executive shall also provide an engagement plan for those entities and the costs for any necessary upgrades;

8. Develop a staffing model based on best practices to operate extreme weather centers and disaster shelters. The staffing model should be inclusive of training requirements for county staff when operating emergency weather centers and disaster shelters. The staffing model should also include the cost to provide staffing for a range of scenarios;

9. Include information, if available from the state department of social and health services on long-term care assistance facilities or family care homes in King County that do not have air conditioning;

10. Consider with King County Regional Homelessness Authority and city partners the use of vouchers for accommodations or day use activities for the most vulnerable residents; and

11. Maintain a website with updated real-time information during extreme weather events and disasters, which includes a listing of all known available extreme weather centers, disaster shelters and emergency shelters, where to go to get help and public health tips for staying safe during extreme weather events and disasters, and how to volunteer or donate resources to organizations providing support during extreme weather events and disasters; and

B. File the operational plan by June 30, 2024, with the clerk of the council, who shall retain an electronic copy and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff and the lead staff for the transportation, economy and environment committee, or its successor.