

**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
CITY OF PALM DESERT
STAFF REPORT**

MEETING DATE: January 21, 2025

PREPARED BY: Daniel Hurtado, Public Safety Analyst

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON COOLING AND WARM CENTERS, SHELTERS, AND COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION ON PURCHASING AND INSTALLING AN EMERGENCY GENERATOR FOR THE PALM DESERT COMMUNITY CENTER BUILDING

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Receive a presentation on the City's Cooling and Warming Centers and Shelters, and discuss the proposed purchase and installation of an emergency generator at the Palm Desert Community Center

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

In recent years, the community has experienced several instances of severe weather, leading to power outages and a heightened demand for emergency shelters and cooling centers. These facilities serve distinct and critical purposes during extreme weather events. Assembly Bill 782 mandates that at least one designated emergency shelter, cooling center, or warming center must accommodate pets. When selecting and designating these locations, it is essential to ensure compliance with this requirement by identifying at least one facility capable of meeting these specific accommodations.

The City of Palm Desert has designated five facilities as Cool Centers for extreme heat events and four facilities as Warming Centers for cold conditions:

- Palm Desert Library – *Pet Friendly & Warm Center*
- *Palm Desert Community Center – Warm Center*
- Portola Community Center – *Pet Friendly & Warm Center*
- Joslyn Senior Center – *Warm Center*
- California State University San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus

These centers play a critical role in safeguarding vulnerable populations, including the elderly, individuals without access to air conditioning, and others at heightened risk of weather-related illnesses. Cooling Centers offer safe, air-conditioned environments to mitigate extreme heat risks, while Warming Centers provide heated spaces to protect against severe cold-related health risks.

However, these Centers typically operate only during regular business hours, and each facility must navigate unique challenges:

- Joslyn Senior Center: Equipped with an operational emergency generator, but not owned or operated by the City.
- Portola Community Center: Limited by its small size.
- Library and Cal State Campus: Neither facility is City-owned.

Differentiating Emergency Shelters and Cool Centers

An emergency shelter provides temporary housing during emergencies, such as natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes or floods). Shelters offer food, water, sleeping arrangements, and basic needs for displaced individuals and families. The City coordinates with the County Department of Social Services and the American Red Cross to provide shelter services until more permanent housing solutions can be arranged.

In contrast, Cooling Centers are dedicated facilities that provide temporary relief from extreme heat, offering cool, air-conditioned spaces where individuals can stay hydrated with access to water and light refreshments. Unlike emergency shelters, Cooling Centers do not provide full shelter services or overnight accommodations. Their primary purpose is to prevent heat-related illnesses by addressing the immediate dangers of high temperatures. Similarly, Warming Centers serve as safe, heated environments during periods of extreme cold, ensuring protection from weather-related health risks. Both types of centers are critical, short-term resources designed to meet specific community needs during extreme weather events.

These efforts aim to enhance the City's emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Currently, the City lacks fully reliable Cooling and Warming Centers or shelters to ensure the safety and well-being of residents during extreme weather events or other emergencies. This discussion is being presented to the City Council for further consideration.

Strategic Plan:

This discussion aligns with the Public Safety and Emergency Services section of the Palm Desert Strategic Plan, specifically Priority 1: Enhance the delivery of public safety services. The strategy is to expand the existing services provided by the fire and police departments to address future growth and safety concerns. One action step is to identify public safety needs, including new equipment.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact with making a recommendation.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Powerpoint