

PRESS RELEASE

Weber County and Ogden City collaborate in finding Code Blue solutions

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City and County Officials Continue Efforts to Secure a Permanent Overflow Shelter Solution

Ogden, UT – Before Code Blue became a state law requiring each county to implement a plan for severe weather emergency sheltering, Ogden demonstrated early leadership by creating Utah's first Code Blue program highlighting Weber County and Ogden City as innovators in homeless services. City officials, in partnership with the Ogden Fire Department and Lantern House, developed a proactive response plan to protect unsheltered individuals during extreme winter conditions.

Drawing from successful models in other states, including New Jersey, Ogden leaders crafted a Code Blue response plan using available resources. One key component of the plan allowed the cafeteria at Lantern House to serve as an emergency overflow shelter when freezing temperatures posed life-threatening risks. While this has been a vital temporary measure, the cafeteria is not designed for overnight sleeping and requires additional fire safety measures, including a fire watch standby, to ensure the protection of all occupants.

"We recognized early on the critical need to provide emergency shelter for our most vulnerable residents during extreme weather," said Mike Mathieu, Ogden Fire Chief. "By working within our existing resources, we were able to create a Code Blue plan that provided life-saving support even before the state required it."

Despite the success of Ogden's early efforts, city and county officials acknowledge the need for a more permanent solution.

"Several members of the Local Homeless Council have been working since the summer of 2024 to identify a suitable location for an overflow and Code Blue shelter," said Weber County Commissioner Sharon Bolos. "With state funding tied to a February 1st deadline, Ogden City leadership stepped up to collaborate with Lantern House on a temporary solution. While this is not a long-term fix, we appreciate the city's willingness to house overflow and Code Blue beds at Lantern House."

Rather than searching for a temporary solution each year, Weber County officials are actively working toward securing a permanent facility to ensure stability for both Lantern House staff and the public. Discussions are underway with city leaders across the county to establish a permanent overflow shelter with all necessary fire safety protections in place.

Ogden Mayor Ben Nadolski emphasized, "Ogden has always been a leader in providing services for the most vulnerable to the point where we are often the only leader in this area. We are happy to provide a temporary solution for Code Blue while county officials engage with other cities to step up and meet the continuing need for services."