

Evacuee Accommodation Supports FAQ

Update for ESS Teams

Q: What is the shelter allowance?

A: The shelter allowance is financial support for evacuees to meet their accommodation needs in the way that works best for them, whether that's staying with friends or family, booking a hotel/motel in the location of their choice, staying at a campsite or another accommodation option. The allowance will be given directly to the evacuee to best meet their accommodation needs. The shelter allowance is sometimes also referred to as an 'accommodation allowance'.

Q: What are the benefits of the shelter allowance?

A: Along with giving evacuees more flexibility to choose their accommodation and reducing pressure on local commercial accommodation during an evacuation, the shelter allowance:

- Better reflects increasing accommodation costs and costs related to billeting
- Provides evacuees more access to commercial accommodation providers beyond those that have supplier agreements with local ESS teams
- Allows evacuees to seek commercial accommodation outside of the host community
- Incentivizes staying with family and friends
- May reduce the need for government intervention such as an order limiting travel, which has significant financial impacts to communities

Q: What is the rate for the shelter allowance?

A: As of June 12, 2024, the shelter allowance is set at \$200/night per household (with 1-5 family members in the household), and \$400/night per household (for families of 6+ people).

Q: How will evacuees receive the shelter allowance?

A: Evacuees who are eligible to receive ESS by Interac e-Transfer will be able to receive the allowance by Interac e-Transfer. To be eligible for Interac e-Transfer evacuees must be authenticated with the BC Services Card App, have a profile in the ERA tool that is connected to their BC Services Card App, and must use online banking.

Evacuees who are not using Interac e-Transfer can receive the shelter allowance by cheque. Further instructions about the paper process will be shared with ESS teams.

Q: Can evacuees still billet with friends or family?

A: Yes. The new shelter allowance replaces the former billeting rates, and evacuees can use the shelter allowance to billet. ESS responders will not be required to note where the evacuee plans to stay and funds will go to the evacuee.

Q: Do ESS responders need to document where evacuees are staying (with the shelter allowance)?

A: No. ESS responders do not need to document an evacuee's independently chosen accommodation, including its location. Evacuees can choose how to best meet their accommodation needs.

Q: Can an evacuee receive a referral to accommodation for a time-period and the shelter allowance for another time-period?

A: Yes. Evacuees can choose how they receive accommodation, whether that's through a referral process or the shelter allowance. While an evacuee is on order, they may need accommodation arranged for them part of the time and they may choose to seek their own accommodation using the shelter allowance for another portion of time. For example, during an evacuation order, an evacuee could stay in a hotel sourced by a local ESS team for 3 days and then choose to find their own accommodation for the next 7 days using the shelter allowance.

If an evacuee chooses the shelter allowance they cannot receive a referral for the same time-period. ESS Responders need to ensure referrals and support times do not overlap and that the referral dates and times fall within the applicable task number. Evacuees should be made aware that they cannot change from the shelter allowance to a referral in the same time-period, they must wait until their first support has expired before changing supports.

Q: Can one evacuee from a household receive a referral to commercial accommodation while another evacuee from the same household receives the shelter allowance for the same time-period?

A: In most situations, all household members must receive the same accommodation through their local ESS team (group lodging, referral to hotel/motel) or the entire household can receive the shelter allowance. The exceptions to this are:

- Household members who are independent of each other (i.e. roommates), must register for ESS separately.
- In cases of partnership separation, household members can register for ESS separately.

Q: Can the allowance be backdated?

A: No. The shelter allowance cannot be backdated.

Q: What if the evacuee's order has been extended?

A: The evacuee will need to be issued additional referrals or Interac e-Transfer. The evacuee cannot change existing paperwork to extend their stay.

Q: What if I have more questions about the shelter allowance?

A: ESS Directors or equivalent and Emergency Program Coordinators or equivalent can email questions to emcr.ess@gov.bc.ca. Also, visit [ESS News](#) for important updates.

Further detailed resources will be shared with ESS teams about the process for connecting evacuees with the shelter allowance, including instructions on filling out paper and ERA forms.