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## Cold weather shelters open to serve the homeless

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**SAN BERNARDINO** - Jerry Delgado shivered and tightened his down vest around his body as he stood in line outside the Salvation Army's Hospitality House on a cold fall night.

Earlier in the day, friends had given the 59-year-old homeless man the vest as a shield against the weather.

He was hoping the Salvation Army, which opened its cold weather shelter this month, would also provide a roof over his head as temperatures would start dipping at night in the weeks ahead.

"When I have to sleep outside, the cold just makes my body ache, so we really need to have this here," said Delgado, who typically sleeps on hard benches in downtown San Bernardino, with only a sweat shirt to keep him warm.

The Salvation Army's cold weather shelter on Fifth Street is one of several in the area opening this month or in the months ahead to serve the county's homeless population.



With the temperature dropping and rain in the forecast, Jerry Delgado, 59, stands in line for food at The Salvation Army and hopes to stay in the cold-weather shelter for the night on Tuesday. (Al Cuizon/Staff Photographer)

Most of the operations are run at shelters that already serve the homeless in some capacity or another, year-round.

The number of people in need of such services has been on the rise in recent years.

In 2007, San Bernardino County was home to more than 7,300 homeless people, up 39 percent from 2003, according to the most recent statistics provided by the county's Office of Homeless Services.

The homeless population is driven by factors like mental illness, job loss and alcohol and drug issues, said Isaac Jackson, homeless services coordinator.

The count is done every two years, and figures from the 2009 homeless count should be released in a month, he added.

But operators of individual shelters say there has

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clearly been an increase in homeless people, mostly families, since the start of the recession.

More than 8,000 men stayed at the Central City Lutheran Mission's cold weather shelter in San Bernardino in 2008-09. More women and children are also showing up at the Salvation Army's Hospitality House and at High Desert Homeless Services in Victorville.

To help those struggling to get by on the county's streets, the Salvation Army on Fifth Street offers a year-round emergency shelter, mostly for women and children.

The cold weather shelter for men opened Oct. 12 and will be open through April 1 from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., seven nights a week. It takes in up to 28 men a night.

The men typically sleep on cots in a smaller room adjacent to the multipurpose room where women and children stay.

Those staying at the shelter typically are given hot meals at dinner and breakfast.

"We just see this as the humane thing to do, to keep people out of the cold," said Salvation Army Capt. Nancy Ball.

The Central City Lutheran Mission will open its cold weather shelter Oct. 21. It will be open from 6 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. seven nights a week until April 30.

Along with a place to sleep, people get a hot meal and breakfast before they leave the facility.

People sleep in sleeping bags or on pews in the church sanctuary.

That cold weather shelter can take in as many as 70

men.

"It's heartbreaking to see all these people with no place to go. If we could open sooner, we would," said Carol Woods, receptionist at the mission.

During the cold winter months, the High Desert Homeless Services in Victorville simply expands the number of beds it offers.

At Joseph's Storehouse in Redlands, the cold weather shelter is open from Dec. 1 to April 1. It opens on any night that the temperature drops below 40 degrees or when it rains.

Those who run shelters say the county needs more such facilities.

But the Office of Homeless Services is more focused on permanent supportive housing.

The goal is to get people into permanent houses and then wrap social services around them, said Jackson.

For now, the Salvation Army is remodeling a new Hospitality House, on 10th Street in San Bernardino, to serve more people under better circumstances.

Ricky Rodriguez, 20, who has been homeless since he left the foster care system at age 18, said having a roof over his head during the coldest months gives him hope of turning his life around.

"It means the world to me to have this here," he said, as he stood in line waiting for food at the Salvation Army shelter. "I hope by staying here, that I can become someone in life, with a nice house and car."

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