



COLD WEATHER RESPONSE GUIDE



During winter storms, there may be dangerously low temperatures, heavy snowfall, strong winds, icing, sleet and freezing rain. Low temperatures can cause health problems such as frostbite and hypothermia. Hypothermia is a life-threatening condition in which the body's temperature gets dangerously low. Signs of hypothermia include shivering, slurred speech, sluggishness, drowsiness, unusual behavior, confusion, dizziness and shallow breathing. Frostbite is a serious injury to a body part caused by freezing. Frostbite usually affects fingers and toes or exposed areas such as ears or parts of the face. Symptoms include redness; pain; numbness; or pale, firm or waxy skin.



Know who is at risk.

Some people are at greater risk for health problems from cold weather. People most likely to be affected by cold weather include:

- ▶ People who are homeless and not in shelters
- ▶ People who drink heavily or use drugs
- ▶ People who live in homes without heat AND:
 - ▶ Are 65 years or older
 - ▶ Have chronic medical problems such as heart disease, breathing problems or diabetes
 - ▶ Have serious mental illness or developmental disabilities
 - ▶ Are socially isolated, have limited mobility or are unable to leave the house

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- ▶ Get health information from credible sources (nyc.gov, cdc.gov and 311).
- ▶ Sign up for Notify NYC for information about emergency events.
- ▶ If you or anyone you know feels overwhelmed or needs help coping, visit nyc.gov/nycwell for free help in your language.
- ▶ In an emergency, always call 911.



Reach out.

- ▶ If you suspect a person is suffering from frostbite or hypothermia, take him or her to a warm place and call 911. Help keep the person warm by removing any damp clothing and covering him or her with warm blankets.
- ▶ Check on neighbors, friends and relatives who may be at risk and help them find a warm place.



Heat your home safely.

- If your home is not heated or if you do not have hot water, speak to the building owner, manager or superintendent. Call 311 if the problem is not fixed.
 - If you are a home owner and are having difficulty paying for heat or repairing equipment, you may qualify for the Home Energy Assistance Program, which provides emergency heating assistance for those who meet income guidelines. Call 311 for more information.
 - If possible, go to a warm place.
- Plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet and never leave them unattended, especially around children.



Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Make sure you have a working carbon monoxide detector and smoke alarm in your home. If your building owner does not provide a carbon monoxide detector and smoke alarm, call 311.
 - For more information on how to test your carbon monoxide detector, visit <http://www.nyc.gov/health> and search “Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning.”
- Never use gas stoves or ovens to heat your home. Kerosene heaters and propane space heaters are illegal in New York City.
- Clear snow from your car’s tailpipe before running the engine. NEVER keep your car running inside a garage or against a snowbank.
- If you smell gas or your carbon monoxide detector goes off, open the windows, go outside and call 911.
 - Do not re-enter until your home is declared safe.
 - Do not use candles, matches or other open flames to check for leaking gas lines.



Be safe outdoors.

- Cover exposed skin. Wear hats, gloves and multiple layers of dry clothing.
- Walk carefully to avoid slips and falls during icy or slippery conditions.
- Be careful when shoveling snow. Stretch first to prevent injuries, and remember to take breaks and drink plenty of water.
- Avoid driving during heavy or blowing snow conditions.