

Get the Facts: Extreme Cold

Temperatures in Chicago are usually the coldest in January, when the average low is 16.5°F, but there are steps you can take ahead of time to make sure you're prepared whenever extreme cold hits the City. Taking preventative action is the best way to stay safe from the serious health risks associated with winter weather. This fact sheet includes tips to help you prepare for extreme cold.

How can I protect myself from the dangers of extreme cold?

- Avoid unnecessary trips outside. If the task can wait until the weather gets warmer, let it wait.
- If you go out into the cold, limit the time you stay outside. Break longer tasks into shorter ones, with indoor rest periods in between. Do not let children play outside for long periods of time.
- Wear several layers of loose, warm clothing.
- Pay special attention to keeping your head, ears, hands and feet warm. Wear a hat, scarf, gloves, thick socks and winter boots. Stay dry to help your clothes keep you warmer.
- Pay extra attention to your body's daily needs. Get enough sleep. Eat high energy foods. Drink warm beverages and soup to help your body stay warm. Avoid alcoholic beverages, which can impair your judgment. Alcohol also dilates blood vessels, which makes the body lose heat faster.

What can I do at home to prepare for extreme cold?

- Make sure your heat is in proper working order.
- The Chicago Fire Department (CFD) **does not** recommend the use of space heaters as an alternate heat source.
- Monitor various outlets for updates about the weather (TV, Radio, Emergency Alert System)
- Keep at least three days' worth of drinking water and canned/no-cook food on hand.
- Put together an emergency kit that includes extra blankets, first aid and medication supplies and a flashlight with spare batteries.
- Don't forget about pets. Even dogs and cats need help handling winter weather. Bring them indoors and make sure they have water and blankets.

How can I help others stay safe from extreme cold?

- Keep a list of contact information for relatives, neighbors and friends, and identify both primary and alternate means of communicating with each other.
- **Check on them frequently**, especially those who are elderly, disabled and/or live alone.
- Know where to locate, and how to contact emergency service providers such as police, fire department, EMS and hospitals.
- Keep a spare battery and charger for mobile devices.
- If you are not comfortable checking on someone, call 311 to request a well-being check.

If you do not have access to heating, call 311 for assistance. You can also go to one of the City warming centers located throughout Chicago. The Garfield Center, located at 10 S. Kedzie Avenue, is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to connect residents to emergency shelter.