



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND CITY OFFICIALS ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS DURING WINTER WEATHER AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

*Collaborative City services will be in effect during the winter season to ensure the safety of all Chicagoans in the coming months*

**CHICAGO** – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, along with the Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC), Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS), Department of Family and Support Services, Peoples Gas, other City departments and sister agencies today reminded residents about the City's available services during the winter months and provided residents with tips to stay safe during inclement weather and health emergencies during the winter season and the COVID-19 pandemic.

“As Chicagoans, we all know a thing or two about winters, however with the COVID-19 pandemic, this season poses unique challenges for everyone,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “Regardless, our shared mission to keep our city running and all our neighborhoods safe remains the same, with our outreach and support services encompassing all our residents, particularly our most vulnerable, to make sure folks receive the resources they need and deserve throughout the winter months.”

As they have done for the last 25 years, the OEMC coordinates the City of Chicago's response efforts to emergencies and works closely with the National Weather Service to monitor conditions throughout the year. In October, the OEMC hosted a Winter Weather Workshop with public safety and infrastructure departments, sister agencies and other partners to plan the coordination of operations for the winter months ahead.

“OEMC advises residents and businesses to consider how the cold and changing weather conditions will impact their planning and to take precautions to be prepared for the winter season,” said OEMC Executive Director Rich Guidice. “This year we have already experienced historic flooding, high lake levels, an EF-1 tornado and extreme heat. OEMC will continue to monitor weather conditions with the National Weather Service and coordinate response efforts with City departments and public partners to keep residents safe and informed.”



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Severe cold temperatures, strong winds and snow can cause additional hazards, whether residents are at home or traveling, so it's important to stay informed. OEMC issues several alerts and notifications to keep people up to date on weather conditions and emergencies.

- **Notify Chicago:** Sign up for emergency alerts at [www.NotifyChicago.org](http://www.NotifyChicago.org)
- **CHILAKE:** For lakefront notices including flooding, TEXT "CHILAKE" to 7-8-0-1-5
- **COVID:** Get COVID-19 updates by TEXTING "COVID19" to 6-7-2-8-3
- **CHIBIZ:** Business updates, TEXT "CHIBIZ" to 6-7-2-8-3

For additional winter weather preparedness tips to keep you and your family safe, visit [chicago.gov/oemc](http://chicago.gov/oemc).

### **Winter Parking Restrictions and Overnight Parking Ban**

The Department of Streets and Sanitation manages more than 9,400 lane miles of roadway and maintains a fleet of over 300 snow vehicles that are fully prepared to respond if needed. In addition, the Department has 400,000 tons of salt stationed at 19 salt piles throughout the city.

Residents are reminded that Chicago's annual winter Overnight Parking Ban is currently in effect. The ban, which began this past Tuesday, December 1, 2020, will be enforced through, April 1, 2021, daily from 3 a.m. to 7 a.m., regardless of snow. The Overnight Parking Ban impacts approximately 107 miles of Chicago's streets and signage is permanently posted along the affected routes. Violators will face a minimum \$150 towing fee, a \$60 ticket and a storage fee of \$25 per day. Vehicles in violation of the ban will be towed to Pounds 2 (10301 S. Doty Ave) or 6 (701 N. Sacramento Ave.).

"Our top priority is keeping the city safe during a winter storm," said the Department of Streets and Sanitation Commissioner John Tully. "Residents can best help us by slowing down when driving and following posted parking restriction signs."

Cars parked in violation of the Overnight Parking Ban prevent critical routes from being fully plowed and salted when it snows. During a snowfall, a build-up of snow and ice next to parked vehicles on these routes further reduces traffic flow and can cause unsafe conditions.



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Chicagoans can visit [www.chicagoshovels.org](http://www.chicagoshovels.org) for a map of streets impacted by the ban and to view the City's snow plows in real-time during a storm. Motorists can also visit [www.chicagoshovels.org](http://www.chicagoshovels.org) or call 311 to find out if their vehicle was towed due to the ban.

### **Chicago Department of Public Health**

As the City braces for cold temperatures and winter weather, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) would like to caution residents to take care of themselves, and to also provide assistance to neighbors, family members, pets and friends, particularly those who are elderly, have disabilities and/or live alone. Taking preventative action is the best way to stay safe from the serious health risks associated with winter weather. Residents are advised to limit their time outside, wear layers of warm clothing when going outside, and watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia. As a reminder, under Chicago's Stay-at-Home Advisory, residents should:

- Only leave home to go to work, school, or for essential needs such as seeking medical care or going to the grocery store or pharmacy.
- Always practice social distancing by staying 6 feet away from others.
- Wear a face covering at all times.
- Do not have gatherings in your home.
- Avoid all non-essential, out-of-state travel.

CDPH is also reminding residents that it's not too late to get a flu shot. The combination of flu and COVID-19 could overwhelm healthcare settings. We all need to do our part to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses and help conserve potentially scarce health resources in hospitals already caring for COVID-19 patients. Residents can find flu shot locations at [chicago.gov/flu](http://chicago.gov/flu).

### **Department of Family and Support Services Warming Areas**

The Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) activates warming areas at the City's six community service centers when temps are at 32 degrees or below.

- The warming areas are open Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- On evenings, weekends or holidays, city-operated facilities including libraries and park facilities might also serve as warming areas, if needed.
- Residents must wear a face covering while in the warming areas.
- The Garfield Community Service Center at 10 South Kedzie, is open on a 24-hour basis to connect families and residents to emergency shelter.
- Those seeking a warm place to go after hours should call 3-1-1 to be connected with available services. Individuals requiring emergency overnight shelter should also call 3-1-1, visit [311.Chicago.gov](http://311.Chicago.gov) or download the CHI311 app to ensure residents are aware of the City's designated warming areas. Residents



are also encouraged to check on relatives, neighbors and friends during a winter weather emergency.

- A list of community service center locations is available at [Chicago.gov/FSS](http://Chicago.gov/FSS). Information and multilingual fliers containing warming center information in English, Spanish and Polish also are posted on DFSS's website at [Chicago.gov/FSS](http://Chicago.gov/FSS).

### **Chicago Fire Department Winter Preparedness Safety Tips**

The Chicago Fire Department does not recommend using space heaters; however, if used, be sure they are UL certified and at least 3 feet from anything that can ignite. Use of a space heater in children's rooms should be monitored closely as children sometimes move them close to or into the bed with tragic results. If extension cords are used, they should be rated at 15 amps minimum and never put cords under carpet.

With the added demand on furnaces and boilers, CFD also reminds residents are required by ordinance to have working carbon monoxide detectors to protect against carbon monoxide leaks from a heating system that could be fatal over time. Those seeking access to warming centers and/or experiencing insufficient heat are encouraged to contact 3-1-1 for immediate assistance. Also, be sure to keep smoke detectors in working order.

### **Department of Water Management**

The Department of Water Management reminds residents to prevent frozen pipes, make sure that warm air is circulating throughout the home and keep a trickle of water running. If pipes freeze, do not use candles or any open flame to thaw them. Use a hair dryer or heating pad. For more info visit [www.chicago.gov/water](http://www.chicago.gov/water)

### **National Weather Service**

The National Weather Service in Chicago suggests keeping an eye on the forecast even 3-5 days out and consider how the expected conditions will impact you and how you can prepare. As winter weather develops and situations are updated, it's even more important to know what actions are needed when advisories and warnings are issued by the National Weather Service.

- **Winter Weather Advisory:** Potentially dangerous winter weather is expected within the next 12-36 hours; Travel difficulties expected.
- **Winter Storm Warning:** Dangerous winter weather is expected in the next 12-36 hours or is occurring; Travel problems are expected.
- **Blizzard Warning:** Severe winter weather is expected in the next 12-36 hours or is occurring – including white out conditions. Do not travel.



## **Cold-Weather Tips**

- Motorists should take extra precautions to winterize vehicles and have necessary supplies on-the-go. Keep in mind, disabled vehicles or distracted driving can cause accidents, impact traffic and others or requiring emergency services.
- Residents should know the signs and care of frostbite and hypothermia. For Winter preparation information visit, [Chicago.gov/OEMC/respond/weatherextremes](https://www.chicago.gov/OEMC/respond/weatherextremes)
- including links to other local, state and federal resources.
- Avoid unnecessary trips outside-if you must go out, limit the time you stay outside;
- Wear several layers of loose, warm clothing;
- Keep your head, hands and feet covered when outdoors;
- Stay dry, because moisture can damage the insulating effectiveness of clothing;
- Pay extra attention to your daily needs: get enough sleep, eat high energy foods, drink warm beverages to help your body stay warm, and avoid alcoholic beverages;

## **Peoples Gas Cold Weather Tips and COVID-19 Financial Assistance**

Last month, Peoples Gas agreed to voluntarily suspend residential disconnections through April 2021. From Dec. 1 to March 31, the annual winter moratorium will protect residential customers from natural gas disconnections. Additionally, extended payment arrangements and financial assistance for relief to customers are available amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more by visiting, [PeoplesGasDelivery.com/payment-bill/assistance](https://PeoplesGasDelivery.com/payment-bill/assistance) or call 866-556-6000.

Peoples Gas customers who are having trouble paying their bills and meet the specific household income guidelines may be eligible for a grant. The Share the Warmth program, which is administered for Peoples Gas by the Community and Economic Development Association (CEDA), provides heating grants to limited and fixed-income households. Eligible customers can receive grants of up to \$200 on their bills.

Make sure you're ready to heat your home safely this winter. Have your furnace inspected by a qualified technician and follow these safety steps throughout the heating season, please call us immediately at 866- 556-6002 if you think you may have a natural gas emergency. For safety tips and additional details, visit [PeoplesGasDelivery.com/safety/cold-weather](https://PeoplesGasDelivery.com/safety/cold-weather)