

READY, SET, GO!

CHECKLIST - EXTREME COLD



Severe cold or winter weather can pose safety and comfort challenges for residents and staff by causing power outages and service disruptions. Developing a comprehensive cold management strategy can reduce risks and maintain efficiency during these events. Here are steps to effectively prepare, manage, or respond to dangerously cold weather or winter storms.

GET READY

- Define specific triggers for activating your cold-related mitigation plan.
- Monitor winter weather or cold temperatures (e.g., using [Winter Storm Severity Index](#) and local emergency alert systems).
- Adhere to or modify your preventive maintenance schedule for emergency equipment.
- Check supply levels and evaluate if par level adjustments are needed (i.e., carbon monoxide detectors, blankets, and heaters).
- Verify the capacity of vendors to maintain delivery and work schedules.
- Consider how other factors, such as infection outbreaks, might impact equipment usage and resident placement.
- Monitor federal, state, and regulatory requirements and pending legislation on heat-related hazards, including:
 - [OSHA Cold Stress Safety and Health Guide](#)
 - [State Operations Manual Appendix PP](#) – Guidance to Surveyors for Long-Term Care Facilities
- Assess staff's ability to recognize and manage cold-related illnesses and emergencies.
- Plan for adjustments to meal service to include hydration, hot food options, and staff safety.
- Weigh the risks and benefits of evacuating versus shelter-in-place decisions.

GET SET

- Train and assess staff competency.
- Adjust wandering risk assessment schedules.
- Verify emergency supply levels.
- Conduct drills, document and adjust plans.
- Review and update communication plans and contacts.

Educate and assess staff competency on:

- Responding to resident cold complaints.
- Assessing comfort, hydration and signs of cold-related illnesses.
- Monitoring and assessing [mental health impacts](#).
- Understanding cold weather's effect on underlying conditions.
- Identifying medications that increase cold-related illness risks.
- Managing hydration for fluid-restricted individuals.
- Monitoring air temperatures in resident areas and responding when outside local and federal guidelines ([42 CFR 483.10 \(j\)](#)).
- Ensuring staff safety during extreme cold.

GO!

- Activate policies and plans that deal with extreme temperatures.
- Assess for comfort, hydration and signs, symptoms and consequences of hypothermia or other cold-related injuries.
- Monitor room temperatures.
- Educate staff and patients on the safe use of space heaters and appropriate clothing.
- Regularly check on [staff](#) and patients to ensure they are warm and hydrated.
- Report any change of condition to the person in charge.
- Limit outside activities.