



EXTREME WINTER WEATHER

Winter storms, including blizzards, can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, snow, ice, and high winds. Winter storms and extremely cold temperatures may create challenges for properties and residents. This document highlights best practices to assist public housing agencies (PHAs) in addressing these challenges.



Readiness

Best practice actions that PHAs may take to prepare for winter storms include:

- **educating** staff and residents on the signs of hypothermia and actions to take to stay warm (<https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>)
- **developing** a disaster readiness plan, often called a [continuity of operations plan](#), to clearly identify staff and community partner roles and responsibilities, including backup coverage and communication channels
- **identifying** places in the community where residents can go to stay warm, such as warming centers, libraries, or shopping malls
- **coordinating** with community partners to provide transportation to/from warming centers
- **creating** warming centers
- **establishing** policies regarding the use of space heaters and other non-PHA issued equipment

PHAs may consider mitigation projects to improve resilience in advance of a winter storm by:

- **preparing** properties by ensuring proper insulation, caulking, and weather stripping
- **wrapping** pipes to keep them from freezing
- **testing** smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors
- **purchasing** and/or evaluating inventory for sand, rock salt, gloves, shovels, batteries, radios, flashlights, and other emergency supplies
- **purchasing** and/or evaluating inventory of generators and fuel and ensuring regular testing



Response

During a winter storm, best practice response actions a PHA may take include:

- **assessing** the impact on business operations, residents, and staff
- **advising** residents and staff to limit their time outside and, if they must go outside, to wear layers of warm clothing
- **contacting** community partners and implementing established procedures
- **communicating** with residents about the location of warming centers and, if not on PHA property, transportation options
- **partnering** with agencies for wellness checks on residents (consider prioritizing or providing additional assistance to high-risk residents and those with special needs)
- **applying** rock salt and/or sand to steps, sidewalks, or other frequent walking paths that may be used and are at risk for ice, snow, or other hazards
- **informing** your local government emergency managers of sheltering or transportation needs
- **keeping** your local HUD points of contact informed of any updates or urgent needs
- **monitoring** for updates on the local news or radio and downloading the [FEMA app](#) to receive real-time weather alerts
- **ensuring** clear and frequent communication with staff, both onsite and working remotely, with relevant updates



Recovery

After a winter storm, best practices include:

- **contacting** your insurance to start a claim for any damages to the facilities, pipes, concrete, or other identified damages
- **checking** your emergency management agency's webpage for updates on resources, federal assistance, and school and government closures
- **checking** [FEMA's](#) website for disaster declaration information
- **taking** resident feedback and documenting lessons learned