

NEWS



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City of Philadelphia Prepares to Weather Cold and Snow; Code Blue In Effect

PHILADELPHIA — With weather reports calling for snow and continued bitter cold, city operating departments have prepared to keep roads and streets clear of ice and snow, assist the homeless and help its citizenry greet Old Man Winter at his worst.

“We have mobilized all the necessary teams needed to deal with both snow removal and issues arising from the frigid temperatures,” said Managing Director Phil Goldsmith. “Every effort will be made to deliver uninterrupted City services while at the same time providing assistance to anyone in need. It is particularly important that Philadelphians keep an eye on the ongoing weather reports and adhere to requests for cooperation so we can keep the city running smoothly.”

Sheltering the Homeless:

The City’s Office of Emergency Shelter and Services (OESS), in partnership with the Outreach Coordination Center, has activated Code Blue and emergency outreach teams are already at work to help provide the homeless with safe and warm shelters.

Code Blue describes bitterly cold weather conditions when the temperature, wind chill and precipitation combine to cause the temperature to fall below 20 degrees Fahrenheit. During Code Blue, the City implements the following exceptional measures:

- Outreach hours are extended to provide coverage 24 hours a day as well as to provide increased coverage during the critical hours of 6 p.m. to midnight.
- Additional areas in emergency shelters are opened to accommodate people that outreach teams bring indoors.
- Outreach teams and the police are able to implement the COTS (Court Ordered Transportation to Shelter) procedure by alerting the on-call City Solicitor and Common Pleas Court Judge.
- Participating shelters allow clients to remain indoors throughout the day.

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“We have already added 170 beds to accommodate the demand,” said Rob Hess, Deputy Managing Director of Special Needs Housing, “and we are prepared to add more if needed. There is no need for anyone to be sleeping on the streets. If citizens see someone living on the streets, they are asked to call the 24-hour emergency outreach number, (215) 232-1984, and an outreach team will be dispatched to offer shelter to the individual.”

Health Precautions:

Health Commissioner John F. Domzalski also encourages Philadelphians to wear several loose fitting layers of clothing while outdoors and to take precautionary measures to protect themselves and their neighbors from injuries and accidents common in winter weather. “Avoiding alcoholic beverages during extremely cold weather is very important. Senior citizen and those with back problems or heart conditions should also refrain from physical exertion like shoveling snow, or walking long distances,” Domzalski said. He also urged neighbors, relatives and friends to check in on older friends and neighbors during the snowstorm; to check on the availability of heat in the home, to offer transportation, and to help with running errands such as grocery shopping.

Snow Removal/Trash Collection

Streets Commissioner Clarena Tolson reports that, “Trash and recycling collections will be collected on Thursday, as usual. Today, crews today applied brine, a liquid salt solution, in areas of higher elevation and areas with hills. The Highway Division crews will mobilize at 8 p.m. to begin salting and plowing on primary and secondary roads. Additional crews and equipment, including Sanitation Division forces, will be ready at 2 a.m. to begin plowing and salting on residential routes and to supplement efforts on primary and secondary roads.”

Residents are reminded of the following tips: Salt steps and sidewalks early to prevent sticking; Shovel a pathway at least 30 inches wide within six hours of the end of the storm; Pile snow on the sidewalk along the curb line. Shoveling snow into a plowed street hinders plowing efforts and is illegal; and park your car as far away from the corner as possible. Cars parked too close to the corner limit the turning radius of salting and plowing vehicles.

Residents and motorists are also asked to be watchful for possible malfunctioning traffic signals. Extremely cold temperatures, as are expected over the next several days, can cause the mechanical equipment to literally freeze and malfunction. Residents can report malfunctioning signals to (215) 686-1776. Additional Traffic Engineering Division crews will be on duty to respond to problem locations.

Residential Heating Assistance:

In addition, the Licenses and Inspections’ Heat Crisis Hotline is available to handle residential heating assistance. The office can be reached at 215-686-2590. Callers can request information on the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Household income guidelines apply. In addition, tenants and homeowners without heat can contact L&I to request emergency inspections. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Saturday through Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Voicemail instructions are available after business hours to connect callers to emergency housing inspectors.

City of Philadelphia

IMPORTANT NUMBERS TO CALL DURING COLD WEATHER CRISIS

- 24-hour emergency outreach number to assist the homeless call: (215) 232-1984
- To make donations of hats, scarves, gloves, socks, coats or blankets to shelters call: (215) 685-9527
- For Licenses and Inspections' Heat Assistance Crisis Hotline call: (215) 686-2590
- To report malfunctioning traffic signals call: (215) 686-1776