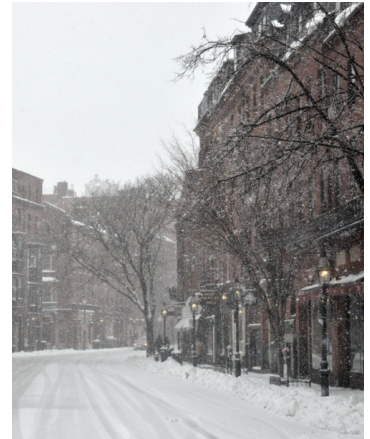


Extreme Cold

Extreme cold events

Winter in Massachusetts means extreme cold, freezing temperatures, and winter storms. Weather changes from climate change can lead to more unseasonable cold and heavier snowfall.

Winter storms can bring dangerous conditions. These include cold temperatures, power outages, loss of communication services, and icy roads. Carbon monoxide poisoning can happen due to unsafe use of generators, heating appliances, and cooking devices or when people warm cars when tailpipes are buried in snow. Extreme cold can cause severe health issues. These include low body temperature (hypothermia) and frostbite. It can also worsen chronic conditions like asthma and COPD.



Who is at higher risk?

Some people may be more at risk during an extreme cold event because of where they live, their access to official government information, availability of resources to prepare and respond, and whether they already have health conditions. These include:

- Children under 5 and people over 65
- People without adequate shelter
- People without adequate heating or insulation in their homes
- People who work outdoors or need to travel in harsh conditions
- People of color, due to systemic racism
- People who speak little or no English, and who may not receive emergency messages in their native language
- Immigrants or new arrivals who are not used to the cold
- People who live alone
- People with medical conditions such as asthma, COPD, cardiovascular disease, and mental illness
- People with disabilities

What can we do about it?

- Follow instructions from public safety officials
- Sign up for weather alerts and make an [extreme cold emergency plan](#)
- Limit outdoor activity for your household, including [pets](#)
- Dress for warmth: wear a hat to reduce heat loss, loose-fitting layers, mittens, and waterproof boots/jacket if possible
- Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from cold air
- Use generators and secondary heating systems only with proper ventilation
- Follow [safety precautions](#) for space heaters, fireplaces, and wood stoves
- If you lose heat, stay in one room; at night, cover windows and external doors with blankets or sheets
- Arrange wellness check-ins with a friend, neighbor, or relative
- Plan ahead for power outages if you rely on electricity for medical equipment or medications

