



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Health and Wellness

Planning for Winter Emergencies



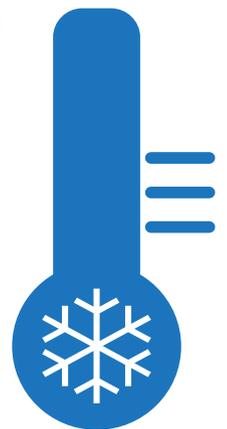
If your program is in an area subject to extreme cold and winter weather, you need a plan for handling related emergencies. Review the new [Emergency Preparedness Manual \(EPM\) for Early Childhood Programs](#) and use the tools there to create or revise your winter weather plan. Consider planning for some or all of the situations below.

Prevent and Respond to Frostbite and Hypothermia

The best way to protect children from cold-related conditions is to dress them properly and monitor the time they spend outdoors. Read our [Cold Weather Safety](#) tip sheet to learn more. Children are vulnerable to cold and—despite your precautions—may develop either frostbite or hypothermia.

Frostbite is a condition where the tissues in some parts of the body freeze, typically the face, fingers, or toes. Warning signs include numbness in the area and skin that turns white or grayish-yellow and is firm or waxy to the touch. Because a frostbitten area becomes numb, both the child and provider may be unaware of the problem until back indoors.

Hypothermia is a dangerously low body temperature caused by exposure to extreme cold. Warning signs include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, memory loss, slurred speech, and drowsiness.





What to do if you suspect frostbite or hypothermia:

- Bring the child into a warm room and call 911
- Remove any wet clothing and wrap the child in blankets
- Call the child’s family or emergency contact to alert them
- Do not rub an area that appears frostbitten as it can make the condition worse



Stay Informed About Possible Bad Weather

There are several ways to do this, including:

- Signing up for community alerts
 - Contact your local government for instructions
- Own a [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Weather Radio](#)
 - Typically, they are battery-operated or have a hand crank
- Making sure your mobile phone can receive **Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs)**; ask your service provider for details
 - You will automatically receive alerts about weather and other emergencies





Plan What to Do if Your Program Loses Power

A snowstorm, wind storm, or ice build-up on utility lines may cause you to lose power. Be prepared for that possibility by:

- Making sure your communications plan is up-to-date so you can quickly contact families to pick up their children (EPM, pp. 12–13, 31–32)
- Planning to keep children warm until they are picked up
 - Stockpile blankets or sleeping bags
- Deciding where to cluster children and staff, and close off other rooms to retain heat
- Having a fully-stocked [emergency kit](#) (EPM, p. 21)
- Having an evacuation plan (EPM, pp. 13–15, 18) for winter emergencies
 - If conditions delay parents from reaching your program and your facility gets too cold, you may need to move to your designated alternate location

Other Winter Emergencies

For more information on winter emergencies and other ways to keep your children and program staff safe, visit these government websites:

- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [Ready.gov](#)

Share Your Questions and Tips on MyPeers

Have you experienced a cold weather emergency in your program? How did you handle it? Do you have questions for other providers? Post them on the MyPeers Health, Safety, and Wellness community.

Not a member of MyPeers? Complete the [MyPeers registration form](#) to create your member account. If you are already a member, find the Health, Safety, and Wellness community in MyPeers under “All Communities,” and select the blue “Join” button.





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