



Maryland Department of Health

Extreme Cold Emergency Plan

2025 Version 6.0

October 26, 2025, thru March 28, 2026

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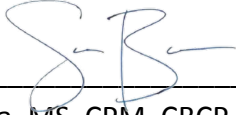
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Record of Changes

Date	Description	Version Number
October 2020	Revised draft prepared	2020 Version 1.0
September 2021	Revised draft prepared	2021 Version 2.0
September 2022	Revised draft prepared	2022 Version 3.0
October 2023	Revised draft prepared	2023 Version 4.0
September 2024	Revised draft prepared	2024 Version 5.0
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Acronyms and Definitions

Acronyms

AAA	Area Agencies on Aging
BHA	Behavioral Health Administration, Maryland Department of Health
CISA	Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency
COMAR	Code of Maryland Regulations
DDA	Developmental Disabilities Administration, Maryland Department of Health
DHS	Department of Human Services, Maryland
EMAC	Emergency Management Assistance Compact
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
ESSENCE	Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics
FQHC	Federally Qualified Health Center
HHS	Health and Human Services
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning
JIC	Joint Information Center
JIS	Joint Information System
LBHA	Local Behavioral Health Authority
LHD	Local Health Department
MACHC	Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers
MAT	Medication-Assisted Treatment
MDEM	Maryland Department of Emergency Management
MDH	Maryland Department of Health
MDoA	Maryland Department of Aging
MIEMAC	Maryland Intrastate Emergency Management Assistance Compact
MIEMSS	Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems
MJOC	Maryland Joint Operations Center
MNCHA	Maryland-National Capital Homecare Association
MTA	Maryland Transit Administration
NWS	National Weather Service
OCME	Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
OEM	Office of Emergency Management
OHQC	Office of Health Care Quality, Maryland Department of Health
OP&R	Office of Preparedness & Response, Maryland Department of Health
PSC	Public Service Commission
SAL	State Activation Level
SCF	State Coordinating Function

SHA	State Highway Administration
SOTA	State Opioid Treatment Authority, Maryland Department of Health
SWEM	Statewide Emergency Management

Definitions

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning – Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that kills without warning. It is produced by the incomplete burning of fuel such as natural gas, gasoline, kerosene, oil, wood, or charcoal. Due to the use of heaters and fuel-burning devices during the winter, the risk of CO poisoning increases during the winter months. The [Maryland Poison Center](#) provides first aid information for [CO poisoning](#).

Cold-related Illness – A cold-related illness is a medical condition caused or exacerbated by extreme cold. For this plan, cold-related illness includes cold-related injury.

- **Hypothermia** – Hypothermia occurs when the body is exposed to cold and the body's mechanisms are unable to replenish the heat that is being lost. Symptoms, such as shivering and mental confusion, can occur due to a drop in the body's core temperature. If a person's temperature is below 95°F, get medical attention immediately. Hypothermia can occur even at cool temperatures (above 40°F) if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water.
- **Cold-related Injury** – A cold-related injury occurs when the body's tissues are damaged by exposure to cold.
 - **Frostbite** – Frostbite is a medical condition that happens when the body's survival mechanisms kick in during extremely cold weather. To protect the vital inner organs, the body cuts circulation to the extremities, such as the feet, hands, and nose, which eventually freeze. Signs of frostbite include redness or pain in any skin area, numbness, skin that feels unusually firm or waxy, and/or white or grayish-yellow skin.

Extreme Cold Terminology (Definitions from NWS)

- **Blowing Snow** – Wind-driven snow that reduces surface visibility to less than 7 miles.
- **Cold Air Damming** – A low-level cold air mass is trapped, often on the east side of mountainous terrain. This trapped cold air can lead to persistent cloud cover, cooler temperatures, and freezing precipitation, especially when warmer, moist air moves in aloft and overruns the cold air mass.
- **Drifting Snow** – An uneven distribution of snowfall/snow depth caused by strong surface winds. Drifting snow may occur during or after a snowfall and is usually associated with blowing snow.

- [*Freezing Fog*](#) – Tiny, supercooled liquid water drops in fog that can freeze instantly on exposed surfaces when surface temperatures are at or below freezing. Freezing fog can cause black ice to form on roadways.
- [*Freezing Rain*](#) – Liquid precipitation that reaches the ground in liquid form and then freezes on contact, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees and power lines.
- [*Nor'easter*](#) – A storm along the east coast with winds over the coastal area, typically from the northeast. They nearly always bring precipitation in the form of heavy rain or snow, as well as gale force winds, rough seas, and occasionally, coastal flooding to the affected regions. During winter, the polar jet stream transports cold Arctic air southward across the plains of Canada and the United States, then eastward toward the Atlantic Ocean where warm air from the Gulf and the Atlantic tries to move northward. This difference in temperature between the warm air over the water and cold Arctic air over the land is the fuel that feeds Nor'easters.
- [*Polar Vortex*](#) – A large area of low pressure and cold air surrounding both of the Earth's poles. The vortex refers to the counter-clockwise flow of air that keeps colder air near the poles. When the polar vortex expands, cold air will move southward with the jet stream.
- [*Sleet*](#) – Ice pellets of frozen or mostly frozen raindrops or refrozen partially melted snowflakes. These pellets usually bounce after hitting the ground or other hard surfaces and can cause roads to freeze.
- [*Snow Squalls*](#) – Intense and limited duration (typically less than 1 hour) periods of moderate to heavy snowfall, accompanied by gusty surface winds resulting in reduced visibility and whiteout conditions, often associated with strong cold fronts.
- [*Wind Chill*](#) – A measure of how cold people feel due to the combined effect of wind and cold temperatures. Both cold temperatures and wind remove heat from the body. As wind speed increases during cold conditions, a body loses heat more quickly. The Wind Chill Index is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin.

Extreme Cold Event – An extreme cold event is a weather condition with excessively low temperatures or a combination of cold temperatures and wind that can potentially cause cold-related illnesses. An extreme cold event is defined as a day or series of days when the NWS has issued a Cold Weather Advisory, Extreme Cold Watch, or Extreme Cold Warning.

- *Complex Cold Emergency* – A Complex Cold Emergency may be declared when an extreme cold event occurs when conditions exacerbate cold-related health risks causing complications requiring additional response. Examples of complications include widespread water and power outages, heavy precipitation (such as snow or ice), and/or prolonged periods of low temperatures accompanied by strong winds.

Public Health and Medical Facilities Serving Vulnerable Populations – Facilities serving vulnerable populations include dialysis centers, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, long-term care facilities, hospice, group homes, and behavioral health facilities. A subset of these facilities, licensed by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ), including hospitals, assisted living facilities, dialysis centers, hospice, and long-term care facilities, are monitored in the [Facility Tracking Dashboard](#). See [Appendix A](#) for a complete list of facilities and organizations that serve vulnerable populations.

Shelters – Due to the coldest temperatures occurring overnight, sheltering the homeless is the primary objective in sheltering operations. Sheltering operations may also be employed or expanded during winter storms to reduce the risk to vulnerable populations. Both homeless and disaster shelters will be referred to in this plan as ‘shelters.’

Vulnerable Populations – Vulnerable populations include individuals disproportionately affected by extreme cold. These groups include infants/newborns, older adults, people with chronic medical conditions, people who remain outdoors for extended periods (individuals experiencing homelessness, hikers, hunters, outdoor workers, etc.), and those who drink alcohol or use drugs.

Warming Centers – A warming center may vary among local jurisdictions. For this plan, a warming center refers to a building identified by local authorities where the public will have access to heat, toilet facilities, and drinking water. A warming center does not necessarily provide medical services. Warming center plans may identify general locations, such as public libraries or malls, where the local government recommends seeking shelter from the cold or designating locations, such as community centers with extended hours.

Weather Alerts

- [Cold Weather Advisory](#) – The National Weather Service (NWS) issues a Cold Weather Advisory for dangerously cold conditions that are not expected to reach warning criteria.
- [Extreme Cold Watch](#) – The NWS issues an Extreme Cold Watch when dangerously cold air, with or without wind, is possible.
- [Extreme Cold Warning](#) – The NWS issues an Extreme Cold Warning when dangerously cold air, with or without wind, is expected. Conditions could lead to hypothermia.
- [Winter Weather Advisory](#) – NWS issues a Winter Weather Advisory when snow, blowing snow, ice, sleet, or a combination of these wintry elements is expected and could affect travel, but conditions should not be hazardous enough to meet warning criteria.
 - NWS issues **Lake Effect Snow Advisories** for widespread or localized lake effect snowfall accumulation (and blowing snow) remaining below warning criteria. Expect lake effect snow showers and assume travel will be difficult in some areas.

- [Winter Storm Watch](#) – NWS issues a Winter Storm Watch when conditions are favorable for a significant winter storm event (heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storm, blowing snow, or a combination of events) which could cause significant impacts.
- [Winter Storm Warning](#) – NWS issues a Winter Storm Warning when confidence is high that a winter storm will produce heavy snow, sleet, or freezing rain and cause significant impacts. Travel will become difficult or impossible in some situations.
 - NWS issues **Blizzard Warnings** for frequent gusts greater than or equal to 35 mph accompanied by falling and/or blowing snow, frequently reducing visibility to less than 1/4 mile for 3 hours or more. A Blizzard Warning means severe winter weather conditions are expected or occurring. Falling and blowing snow with strong winds and poor visibility are likely, leading to whiteout conditions, making travel extremely difficult.
 - NWS usually issues **Ice Storm Warnings** for ice accumulation of around 1/4 inch or more. This amount of ice accumulation will make travel dangerous or impossible and likely lead to snapped power lines and falling tree branches. Travel is strongly discouraged.
 - NWS issues **Lake Effect Snow Warnings** when widespread or localized lake-induced snow squalls or heavy showers are expected to produce significant snowfall accumulation. Lake effect snow usually develops in narrow bands and impacts a limited area. These bands can produce very heavy snow with sudden restrictions in visibility. Driving conditions may become hazardous at times.

Purpose

The Maryland Extreme Cold Emergency Plan, developed by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), guides the state's actions during the cold season to prevent cold-related illness and death. This plan also guides the local jurisdictions as they fulfill their responsibilities.

Scope

This plan establishes the framework for MDH's response to extreme cold emergencies, defining roles, responsibilities, and procedures for protecting the public health and safety of those impacted by extreme cold.

The Concept of Operations for this plan addresses operations that occur before the start of the cold season, during the cold season, and post-cold season. The Office of Preparedness & Response (OP&R) within MDH provides weekly cold reports on the [OP&R webpage](#) during each cold season. Enhanced operations are outlined to occur during an extreme cold event, such as a Cold Weather

Advisory or Extreme Cold Warning. At the end of the extreme cold event, enhanced operations would stop, and regular cold season operations would resume.

Public Information Actions

Public Information actions could be taken by MDH, local health departments (LHDs), or both. The activities may also be coordinated through a Joint Information Center (JIC) or Joint Information System (JIS). In addition, [Winter Infographics](#) from NWS may be helpful for public messaging.

Local Jurisdiction Actions

All actions listed for the local jurisdictions in this plan are recommendations. Each local jurisdiction handles Extreme Cold Events differently. The recommendations included in this plan may not be applicable or practical for all local jurisdictions or may be fulfilled by different organizations at the local level. Typically, the agency or organization that has a permit to host a public event can shut it down due to a weather emergency, including a Wind Chill Advisory, Wind Chill Warning/Watch, or Complex Cold Emergency. In addition, local health departments can provide targeted risk communication messaging to the public during Extreme Cold.

Warming center and shelter managers should contact their local health officials for information specific to their locations as conditions vary from community to community.

Maryland Regulations on Power Termination

[COMAR 20.31.03.03](#)¹ forbids utility companies from terminating the power of an occupied residential building for nonpayment of bills without submitting an affidavit to the Public Service Commission (PSC) that the termination does not constitute a threat to the life or health of the residential occupants. In addition, PSC forbids termination for nonpayment of bills on any day when the forecast temperature, made at 6 a.m., is 32°F or below through the extreme weather period. *For PSC, this timeframe is as follows: November 1 through and including March 31 of the immediately succeeding calendar year unless the utility first certifies to the Commission by an affidavit filed at least 24 hours before the termination, that the termination does not constitute a threat to the life or health of the occupant(s).*

¹ COMAR 220.31.03 is being revised and subject to change.

Concept of Operations

Pre-Cold Season Operations

Triggers

- Pre-cold season activities begin in late September.

MDH Actions

- Conduct an annual review of the MDH Extreme Cold Emergency Plan to update as necessary.
- Distribute the revised Extreme Cold Emergency Plan to LHDs and other partners.
- Provide guidance and recommend best practices to aid jurisdictions in revising their local Extreme Cold Emergency Plans as requested.
- Update its website to include accurate LHD contact information.
- Review Continuity of Operations planning in preparation for extreme cold events.
- Recommend that agencies, such as the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS), update contact lists of Public Health and Medical Facilities Serving Vulnerable Populations.
- Recommend that MDH units, including Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), and OHCQ, update contact lists of Public Health and Medical Facilities Serving Vulnerable Populations, including facilities in the [OP&R Facility Tracking Sheet](#)².
- Review planning and monitoring for seasonal respiratory illnesses that may be impacted by extreme cold events.

Public Information

- MDH will update public education materials on the [MDH Cold Weather Resources](#) website, including fact sheets and links.
- MDH and LHDs will review and revise written and electronic public information materials and distribute them as appropriate.

Local Jurisdiction Actions

- Conduct an annual review of the jurisdiction's extreme cold plan.
- Verify [LHD contact information on the MDH website](#) is accurate.
- Monitor the NWS for local temperature data.
- Review planning activities and maintain situational awareness with local partners.
- Engage school systems to review and set guidelines for conducting and canceling outdoor activities, including field trips.

² The OP&R Facility Tracking Sheet is only accessible to MDH OP&R and OHCQ.

- Begin actively tracking large public events that could have severe public health consequences in an extreme cold event.
- Ensure cold safety warnings are included with all winter event permits.
- Review the list of facilities within their jurisdiction, accessed through the [Facility Tracking Dashboard](#). Note that counties may only access their specific data. (See Appendix B of the MDH Power Outage and Facility Tracking Plan for instructions on using the Facility Tracking Dashboard.)
- Coordinate with other local agencies, such as the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), Departments of Social Services (DSS), and Local Behavioral Health Authorities, to identify and update contact lists of other Public Health and Medical Facilities Serving Vulnerable Populations.
- Review locations to be utilized as warming centers and shelters.

Cold Season Operations

All actions identified in this section will be completed throughout the Cold Season, including during an extreme cold event.

Triggers

- Cold-related morbidity and mortality surveillance begins on Sunday, October 26, 2025.
- MDH and local jurisdictions should launch extreme cold plan activities by the first week of December, if no extreme cold events have occurred.

Surveillance

- NWS determines the potential cold impact in the forecast. The Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) and MDH monitor data from three NWS offices: Baltimore/Washington; Mt. Holly, NJ; and Wakefield, VA.
 - MDEM will also monitor Mesonet weather stations for weather impacts.
- MDH and local jurisdictions will monitor weather forecasts for the possibility of predicted weather conditions consistent with extreme cold.
- MDH will conduct surveillance for cold-related illnesses, CO poisoning visits to the emergency department and urgent care, and hypothermia deaths reported by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) from October 26, 2025, to March 28, 2026.
- MDH will distribute weekly reports analyzing the impact of cold-related illnesses and CO poisoning on public health. The reports will be made available to the public at a predetermined time every week. These reports will include, but may not be limited to:
 - Emergency department visits for [cold-related illness](#) and CO poisoning, through MDH's syndromic surveillance system, the Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics (ESSENCE).

- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) encounters for cold-related illnesses, as reported in Patient Care Report Data.
 - CO poisoning reported for ED visits.
 - Number of cold-related deaths reported by OCME.
 - Link to [information resources for extreme cold](#).
- MDEM will coordinate with local offices of emergency management (OEMs) to monitor large public events that could be impacted by extreme cold through the MDEM Duty Officer, Maryland Joint Operations Center (MJOC), or Liaison Officers.
- MDEM will routinely update the [SEAR Special Events Dashboard](#) to display Special Events Data for partners.³
- MDEM will monitor power outages in the state and provide the information on its [Maryland Power Outages map](#). Power outages can also be monitored at [PowerOutage.us](#).
- The Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) will monitor EMS incidents statewide and track emergency calls for cold-related illnesses and CO poisoning.

MDH Actions

- Review and revise this plan following any extreme cold events as necessary.
- Contact regulated Public Health and Medical Facilities Serving Vulnerable Populations, such as skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities to promote winter preparedness, reminding them to check their generators and heat systems and to report real or potential concerns and issues (see Appendix C of the MHD Power Outage and Facility Tracking Plan for a template email).

Public Information

- MDH and jurisdictions will issue a press release by the third week of December or just before the first forecasted extreme cold event, reminding Marylanders of ways to stay safe in extreme cold. This will include social media posts linking to the [MDH Cold Weather Resources](#) website and other relevant resources. Additionally, consider incorporating information about energy assistance programs and other community resources.
- MDH will issue a press release to announce the first cold-related death of the season. This will also include information on how to stay safe in extreme cold and prevent cold-related illnesses.
- MDH and LHDs will post locations of warming centers on their websites.

³ SEAR stands for "Special Event Assessment Rating" and is determined by event features such as: attendance, location, type of venue (stadium, park, street parade, etc), and more.

Local Jurisdiction Actions

- Monitor the NWS for local temperature data.
- Review planning activities and maintain situational awareness.
- Ensure that locations designated as warming centers and shelters are prepared for use as needed.
- Conduct continuity of operations/tactical planning.

Enhanced Operations During a Cold Weather Advisory or Extreme Cold Watch***Triggers***

- NWS has issued a Cold Weather Advisory or an Extreme Cold Watch.

Surveillance

- MDH will maintain passive situational awareness of Public Health and Medical Facilities Serving Vulnerable Populations.
- MDH will continue to monitor syndromic surveillance systems and issue the weekly reports for the duration of the cold season.
- MDH and MDEM will continue to monitor NWS forecasts for any indication of extreme cold.
- MDEM will continue to monitor power outages and inform/notify MDH of issues.
- Local agencies will monitor any weather advisories and power outages that impact their jurisdictions.

MDH Actions

- Notify the jurisdictions expected to be impacted by the extreme cold event.
- Coordinate with MIEMSS and MDEM to issue alerts when appropriate.
- Maintain situational awareness and gauge the potential impact of the anticipated event.
- Recommend that agencies, such as the DHS and the Maryland Department of Aging (MDoA), outreach to vulnerable populations through facilities and programs that serve those populations.
- Recommend that MDH units, including BHA, DDA, and OHCQ, conduct outreach to vulnerable populations through facilities and programs that serve those populations.

Public Information

- MDH and/or LHDs may alert the public of the Cold Weather Advisory via media outlets, websites, and social media.
- MDH will coordinate with jurisdiction(s) on extreme cold event communications.
- MDH and LHDs should employ consistent messaging that urges individuals to check on elderly neighbors, family members, and individuals with behavioral, developmental delays, emotional, and/or neurological health issues.

- MDH and LHDs should include emergency preparedness messaging for preventing cold-related illnesses in pets, including resources found at Ready.gov for [Winter Weather](#) and [Preparing Pets for Disasters](#).
- Local jurisdictions may utilize existing signage (such as outside firehouses, public buildings, or public buses) to display concise cold safety tips.
- Local jurisdictions may coordinate public messaging, including locations for warming centers, shelters, and transportation options, with public access numbers such as non-emergency dispatch, 211 Maryland, 311, or reverse 911 systems.

Local Jurisdiction Actions

- Notify local extreme cold planning partners, such as DSS, AAA, Local Behavioral Health Authority (LBHA), fire, and EMS.
- Coordinate with OEMs to recommend heightening mitigation protections or to discourage outdoor public events.
- Coordinate with relevant organizations to provide outreach to vulnerable populations.
- Coordinate with existing volunteers and partners to respond to the extreme cold event.
- Activate local warming center/shelter plans as needed.
 - Local OEMs will post warming center and shelter openings to WebEOC.
 - Local OEMs, LHDs, and local DSSs will notify each other of warming center and shelter openings.
 - LHDs will notify MDH with a press release or website of the warming center and shelter locations.
 - Consider providing all locally used call centers (911, 211 Maryland, hospital, and private 'Ask a Nurse' lines) with locations of warming centers, shelters, and information on transportation options.
- Activate transportation assistance programs for vulnerable populations, as available, to be transported to warming centers/shelters as needed.
- Recommend that government and schools restrict outdoor activities.
- Monitor for power outages and report facility status through the [Facility Tracking Dashboard](#).
- Coordinate with other local agencies, such as the AAA, DSS, and Local Behavioral Health Authorities, and partner organizations to provide outreach to vulnerable populations.
- Report information regarding local facilities with unmet needs to MDH.
- Review plans for extra staffing and emergency support services and consider staging potential resources.

Demobilization

- Actions related to the Cold Weather Advisory stop when the Cold Weather Advisory or Extreme Cold Watch expires and revert to Cold Season Operations.

Enhanced Operations During an Extreme Cold Warning***Triggers***

- NWS has issued an Extreme Cold Warning.

Surveillance

- All surveillance actions outlined for a Cold Weather Advisory/Extreme Cold Watch will be taken.

MDH Actions

MDH will take all the actions outlined for a Cold Weather Advisory/Extreme Cold Watch and those noted below.

- Operate at an “Enhanced Readiness” level and coordinate with MDEM in preparation for a potential Complex Cold Emergency.
- May engage 211 Maryland as a public access number for cold-related questions and provide 211 Maryland with up-to-date public messaging materials.
- Coordinate with MDEM to conduct statewide emergency management (SWEM) call(s) to discuss the potential impact of the event with stakeholders, including, but not limited to:
 - Internal MDH staff,
 - LHD/local OEM staff, and
 - State Coordinating Functions (SCFs) and other state agencies.

Public Information

- All public information actions outlined for a Cold Weather Advisory/Extreme Cold Watch will be taken.

Local Jurisdiction Actions

Local jurisdictions will take all the actions outlined for a Cold Weather Advisory/Extreme Cold Watch and those noted below.

- Provide and maintain updated information on local warming centers and shelters via WebEOC.
- Local emergency services may report any healthcare facilities and independent living facilities (such as subsidized senior housing apartment buildings) with excessively cold interiors that may pose a danger to residents to local OEMs and LHDs.

Demobilization

- Actions related to the Extreme Cold Warning stop when the Extreme Cold Warning expires and revert to Cold Season Operations.

Enhanced Operations During a Complex Cold Emergency***Triggers***

- MDH and MDEM will use discretion in deciding what conditions constitute a Complex Cold Emergency. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - Significant power outages or water outages, or
 - Extended periods of low temperatures with a wind chill of -5°F, or
 - NWS issues a Winter Storm Advisory, Watch, or Warning,
 - Hazardous precipitation during a cold event causing significant hail or snowfall, or
 - Any other factors that would exacerbate a cold emergency.

Surveillance

All surveillance actions outlined for a Cold Weather Advisory and those noted below will be taken.

- MDEM will escalate the State Activation Level (SAL) as appropriate to facilitate interagency coordination.
- MDEM and MDH may request a State of Preparedness for a Complex Cold Emergency.
- MDH will begin issuing daily cold-related illness surveillance throughout the emergency as appropriate.
 - The final daily report will be issued the day following the final cold emergency day and will include surveillance data from the final cold emergency day.
- MDH may increase the frequency of release of death information as approved by the Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services.
 - The distribution of death data will follow a prescribed flow of information due to the overwhelming number of requests for information during these events.
 - Current processes include, but are not limited to:
 - OCME death data will be routed internally to the MDH Office of Preparedness and Response.
 - MDH will notify local health officers or their designee(s) of the details of deaths in their jurisdiction.
 - Reporting, which will include the jurisdiction where the death occurred, age group, and gender of the decedent, will be sent to planning partners and may be reported publicly as approved by MDH. Details of death will not be included in any public report.

MDH Actions

MDH will take all the actions outlined for an Extreme Cold Warning and those noted below.

- Coordinate with MDEM to conduct SWEM call(s) to discuss the potential impact of the event with stakeholders, including, but not limited to:
 - Internal MDH staff,
 - LHD/local OEM staff, and
 - SCFs and other state agencies.
- Activate the MDH Power Outage and Facility Tracking Plan to monitor Public Health and Medical Facilities Serving Vulnerable Populations.
- Coordinate with MDEM, DHS, MDoA, DDA, BHA, OHCQ, local agencies, and other organizations, such as Maryland-National Capital Homecare Association (MNCHA) and treatment clinics, as necessary to determine if vulnerable populations need additional assistance.
- OHCQ will report on findings of facilities outside of regulatory compliance due to temperatures.
- Coordinate with MDEM to:
 - Obtain information from local OEMs on public events that may be affected by the Complex Cold Emergency.
 - Recommend PSC and power companies activate their power outage response and mitigation plans as necessary.

Public Information

All public information actions outlined for a Cold Weather Advisory and those noted below will be taken.

- MDEM may activate a JIC/JIS to address public messaging.
- MDEM and MDH, through the JIC/JIS (if activated), may use 211 Maryland or public access numbers to distribute cold emergency information.
- MDH, through the JIC/JIS (if activated), will notify the public if the Maryland Insurance Administration waives existing pharmacy restrictions on the ability to renew prescriptions due to the emergency.
- Local jurisdictions, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), and the State Highway Administration (SHA) will utilize existing digital signage (such as outside firehouses, public buildings, or public buses) to display concise cold safety tips.
- Local jurisdictions with access to reverse-911 systems may use them to provide cold advisory warnings to vulnerable populations.

Local Jurisdiction Actions

Local jurisdictions will take all the actions outlined for an Extreme Cold Warning and those noted below.

- Local OEMs may notify each other of large-scale public events in the local jurisdiction that have the potential to result in a mass casualty incident.
- Local OEMs should notify MDEM of the above events; MDEM will notify MDH and MIEMSS.
- May recommend greater mitigation protections or cancellation of outdoor public events.
- May connect to energy assistance / other assistance programs, and community resources, including homeless services.
- Jurisdictions may expand warming center and shelter capacity as necessary.

Water Shortages

- In the event of a widespread and/or prolonged water shortage, local jurisdictions should consider providing alternative potable water to affected residents or request resources through local OEMs, the Maryland Intrastate Emergency Management Assistance Compact (MIEMAC), or the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) if there is a state of emergency declaration.
- Local jurisdictions may request assistance from the private sector to provide and distribute water.

Power Outages

- During a widespread and/or prolonged power outage, MDH will coordinate with MDEM, the PSC, and appropriate power companies to ensure Public Health and Medical Facilities Serving Vulnerable Populations are prioritized for power restoration due to the life-threatening nature of extreme cold in powerless facilities.
- The Maryland Insurance Administration may consider waivers to pharmacy restrictions regarding prescription refills.

Demobilization

- MDEM will lower the SAL as appropriate.
- Actions related to the Complex Cold Emergency stop once the complicating factors have been resolved and revert to the following:
 - Extreme Cold Warning Operations if an Extreme Cold Warning is in effect.
 - Cold Weather Advisory Operations if a Cold Weather Advisory is in effect.
 - Cold Season Operations if all advisories have expired.

Post-Cold Season Operations

Triggers

- Post-cold activities begin in April, unless public health experts recommend a different demobilization date based on extenuating circumstances.

Surveillance

- All surveillance activities for the cold season will cease on March 28, 2026, unless public health experts recommend extending.

MDH Actions

- Collect After-Action Reports, when applicable, from affected local jurisdictions and determine best practices to be included in the following year's planning efforts.
- Collect, analyze, and release statewide surveillance data from the cold season for use in future cold planning.
- Review and update the MDH Extreme Cold Plan, including a comprehensive review of local plans and resources.

Local Jurisdiction Actions

- Cease cold-event monitoring and return warming centers and shelters to regular hours as appropriate.
- Coordinate with MDH on an annual cold plan review.
- Identify organizations serving vulnerable populations to partner with for the following cold season.
- Evaluate interventions and review evaluation tools to monitor effectiveness:
 - Warming center and shelter usage,
 - Transportation program usage, if available,
 - EMS system usage.

Appendix A - Public Health and Medical Facilities Serving Vulnerable Populations

Public Health and Medical Facilities Serving Vulnerable Populations – facilities serving vulnerable populations include dialysis centers, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, long-term care facilities, hospice, group homes, and behavioral health facilities. A subset of these facilities, licensed by the MDH Office of Health Care Quality (hospitals, assisted living facilities, dialysis centers, hospice, and long-term care facilities), are monitored in the Facility Tracking Sheet.

Facilities on the Facility Tracking Sheet:

- Hospitals
- Assisted living
- Inpatient Hospice Centers
- Long-term care
- Dialysis centers

Residential Facilities not included on the Facility Tracking Sheet:

- MDH Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) residential facilities, including group homes serving medically fragile foster care youth
- MDH Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) residential treatment facilities
- Health and Human Services (HHS), state and local, group homes

Non-Residential Facilities that Serve Vulnerable Populations:

- Adult medical day care
- Hospitals
- Ambulatory care
- Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) centers
- Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)
- Rehabilitation facilities

Organizations that Serve Vulnerable Populations:

- Maryland-National Capital Homecare Association (MNCHA)
- Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers (MACHC)
- Local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)
- Local Departments of Social Services (DSS)
- Local Behavioral Health Authority (LBHA)
- Maryland Department of Aging (MDoA)
- Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Home Hospice