



STATE OF WASHINGTON 023-010
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration
PO Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-560

January 16, 2024

ALTSA: AFH #2024-001
ALTSA: ALF #2024-001
ALTSA: CCRSS #2024-001
ALTSA: ICF/IID #2024-001
ALTSA: ESF #2024-001
ALTSA: NH #2024-001

**PRECAUTIONS FOR RESIDENTS AND STAFF
FOR EXTREME COLD WEATHER CONDITIONS**

Dear Provider/Administrator/Superintendent:

With the arrival of cold temperatures, you are encouraged to take the necessary precautions to ensure that residents are comfortable and safe throughout the winter months. The Department of Health put out a news release that cold weather can be very dangerous if you are not prepared, particularly the elderly and those with medical conditions. Health risks include hypothermia, frostbite, falls, vehicle accidents, and carbon monoxide poisoning from improper indoor use of fires or generators. Winter storms can make these problems worse by causing power outages and property damage. Hypothermia can occur when indoor air temperatures are 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit.

What You Can Do

- Please be on alert to any residents who wander and are at high risk for elopement.
- Focus on safety and ensuring residents stay safe and always know their whereabouts. Account for all residents, visitors and staff. Ensure the health and safety of any resident leaving the facility/home for whatever reason.
- Familiarize staff with your cold weather policies and procedures and know when to implement them.
- Staff need to get to work to provide service. Practice safe winter driving and carry emergency supplies in your vehicles.
- Ensure HVAC systems, auxiliary power systems, back-up generators are tested and operating to ensure heated facilities. Ensure that you have sufficient generator fuel on hand if you have a generator, and that you follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule. Know what facility/home systems will work when the generator is on.
- Have firewood available for homes with fireplaces in case there are power outages and the need for back up heat.
- Ensure residents wear appropriate winter clothing when indoors and outerwear if going outdoors.
- Offer residents warm fluids during the winter months.
- Attend to facility/home windows and doors with drafts.
- Be prepared for any power outages.
- Ensure that all means of egress to the public way for your facility/home is always kept clear and functional. Take care of icy sidewalks safely.

Precautions for Extreme Cold Weather Conditions

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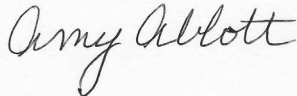
Page 2

- Ensure adequate water supplies and fuel is available to shelter residents in place for several days should the need arise. Be ready as resources could be depleted by the time extreme weather occurs.
- Check for weather updates on your local news. A weather resource you can check for statewide conditions is <https://graphical.weather.gov/sectors/washington.php>

Extreme cold conditions should be treated as major weather just like extreme heat, storms and power outages. Now is the time to pull out the facility/home emergency and disaster plan and ensure it is up to date, and your staff are educated on how and what to do.

Be prepared, be safe. Thank you for your service to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of residents living in residential care settings. If you have questions, please contact RCSPolicy@dshs.wa.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Abbott". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: *"Transforming Lives"*