

Hazard-Specific Annex

Code Blue Extreme Cold Plan

- Lead Agency:** Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD)
- Core Organizations:** Baltimore City Community Action Partnership (BCCAP)
Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD)
Baltimore City Office of Information & Technology (BCIT)
Baltimore Police Department (BPD)
Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Mayor’s Office of Homeless Services (MOHS)
Mayor’s Office of Neighborhoods (MON)
Office of Emergency Management (OEM)
- Support Organizations:** Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB)
Department of Planning (DOP)
HealthCare Access Maryland (HCAM)
Mayor’s Office of Neighborhoods (MON)
Salvation Army
- Attachment A** [Hypothermia Facts](#) and [Snow Shoveling Safety Tips](#)
Attachment B [Maryland Energy Assistance Program Information Flyer](#)
Attachment C [BGE Information for Customers with Special Needs](#)
Attachment D [BGE Third Party Notification Program Information](#)
Attachment E [Red Cross Winter Preparedness Tips](#)
Attachment F [Baltimore City Street Outreach Information Card](#)
Attachment G [Maryland Senior Call Check Program](#)

1. Overview

1.1. Summary

Baltimore City's Code Blue Extreme Cold Program establishes a coordinated approach to providing relief from extreme cold weather to vulnerable populations in Baltimore City during the winter season. The response period is from November 15th to March 15th with the greatest risk from December to February. Risk peaks in January, which is usually the coldest month of the year. The program's goal is to reduce the number of hypothermia deaths and related illnesses in the City. Based on historical data from Baltimore and various literature and reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the vulnerable populations targeted by this plan include:

- Street dwellers and individuals experiencing homelessness
- Individuals abusing drugs, alcohol, or other substances
- Economically disadvantaged individuals and those without home heating
- Elderly and young children
- Individuals suffering from pre-existing heart conditions and diabetes
- Individuals suffering from behavioral health problems

Due to the continued response to COVID-19, programs and agencies may have to modify operations during the Code Blue Extreme Cold season to comply with City of Baltimore, the State of Maryland, and the CDC guidelines.

1.2. Activation

The Health Commissioner makes a **Code Blue Extreme Cold** declaration based on the following criteria. When appropriate, the declaration will specify the risk period as "all day" or "night only" based on forecasted temperatures.

- Temperatures, including wind chill, are expected to be 13°F or below. This threshold can be reached by having a temperature of 20°F or less with 5 mph sustained winds or a temperature of 25°F or less with 15 mph sustained winds.
- Other conditions (e.g., strong winds, forecasted precipitation for more than two hours, extended period of cold, sudden cold after a warm period) deemed by the Health Commissioner to be severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of vulnerable Baltimore citizens.

If possible, the decision to declare a Code Blue Extreme Cold Alert will be made by 5:00 p.m. on the previous business day and by 5:00 p.m. on Friday before the weekend in which extreme cold weather is forecasted. The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) will send out a press release announcing the Code Blue Extreme Cold Alert status. BCHD will also notify the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and other members of the Code Blue Extreme Cold Planning Committee (see section 7 for a complete list of participating City agencies).

2. Services**2.1. Shelter**

The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) has a Winter Shelter Plan to address the shelter needs of individuals experiencing homelessness during the winter months which covers October 15th to April 1st. When the temperature with wind chill reaches 32°F or below, MOHS will make a Winter Shelter Declaration and City-funded shelters will expand shelter capacity to ensure any individual experiencing homelessness and wanting shelter will be accommodated. On Code Blue Extreme Cold days, City-funded shelter site will shelter-in-place to ensure any individual experiencing homelessness will be able to remain inside. In addition, on Code Blue Extreme Cold days, the City will encourage private homeless shelters to open for extended hours. Citizens re-entering into society from prison terms are also provided information and resources to find shelters or more permanent housing year-round by private non-profits.

The MOHS is responsible for Winter Shelter declarations and will communicate with shelter providers, non-profit organizations, 211, 311, etc. to ensure information is disseminated to the homeless population.

MOHS is also responsible for coordinating bed utilization of all City-funded shelters during a Winter Shelter Declaration. If necessary, an emergency Winter Shelter facility will be opened to provide shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness. MOHS is working with the Department of General Services and BCHD to ensure City-funded shelters are following COVID-19 guidelines for congregate settings.

Information about winter sheltering can be found on the MOHS website:
<https://homeless.baltimorecity.gov/>.

A. Behavioral Health Issues

If clients at a shelter have behavioral health needs, need a mental health evaluation, or need sobering services, shelter staff can call Baltimore City's Here2Help Hotline 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week at (410) 433-5175. Counselors will speak to the individual or the shelter staff to screen and/or refer the individual to the appropriate services. Here2Help Hotline is a collaborative effort with Baltimore City Crisis Response (BCRI), Baltimore Child & Adolescent Responses System (BCARS), Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) and HealthCare Access Maryland (HCAM).

2.2. Meals

Due to COVID-19, Eating Together meals will not be served at the community congregate meal sites. However, meals will continue to be delivered to congregate meal sites and residential sites in the event of bad weather. If weather is predicted to be extreme, frozen or shelf-stable meals will be provided to all participants when deliveries cannot be made. CARE Services will communicate with MJM Innovations (meal management company) and Food Vendors (meal caterer) to ensure distribution to all enrolled residents as scheduled. Home delivered meals distributed by Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland will continue.

The Waxter Center (1000 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD 21201) will continue to store a stable inventory of 300 non-perishable meals for seniors. The Waxter Center can be reached at (410) 396-1324.

If an older adult needs meals, they can contact the Division of Aging at 410-396-2273.

The Salvation Army will continue to run its FEEDMORE program, a mobile-canteen soup kitchen, that feeds individuals experiencing homelessness each evening Monday through Saturday. On nights when Code Blue Extreme Cold has been declared, Salvation Army will take the canteen out and provide hot drinks and other available items for keeping persons warm.

2.3. Energy Assistance Program

Individuals needing energy assistance can apply one of the following ways:

- Online at <https://www.bmorechildren.com/residents>
- Call 410-396-5555
- Mail a completed application with the required documents to
OHEP Processing Center
1731 E. Chase Street
Baltimore, MD, 21213
- Submit an application to a Community Action Partnership (CAP) Center drop box
 - Northern CAP Center
5225 York Rd, Baltimore, MD 21212
 - Northwest CAP Center
3939 Reisterstown Rd, Baltimore, MD 21215
 - Eastern CAP Center
1731 E. Chase Street, Baltimore, MD 21213
 - Southeast CAP Center
3411 Bank Street, Baltimore, MD 21224
 - Southern CAP Center
606 Cherry Hill Road, Baltimore, MD 21225

Eligibility is currently set at 200% of the Federal Poverty level. The Maryland Department of Human Resources through the Baltimore City Community Action Partnership (BCCAP) - Office of Home Energy Programs has more information at <http://dhs.maryland.gov/office-of-home-energy-programs/>, including the resource guide for Baltimore City, income level guidelines and online application form.

BCCAP staff can provide assistance in completing the application and case management services. Individuals who are not eligible for this service will be

encouraged to seek other assistance programs, such as home energy efficiency programs that are available through Baltimore City. For questions about energy assistance call 410-396-5555 or email ohep@baltimorecity.gov.

2.4. “No Heat” Home Repair Services

This service can be requested through 311 as a “no heat” request starting November 1st or online at <https://portal.neighborlysoftware.com/BALTIMOREMD/participant>

The following services are available:

- **Repair or replacement of non-working or dangerous heating systems:**
A LIGHT Coordinator will be assigned within 48 hours to an initial intake and no heat phone assessment. A pre-application form will be completed via telephone and referral to the rehabilitation or Weatherization Office will be made. The time frame for work will depend on which of our limited funding sources is available at the time the referral is made.

If referred to the Weatherization Program the house must be in overall good condition (i.e., no roof leaks, major structural defects, etc.). Inclement weather and existing conditions, such as a flooded basement or a water or sewer line break in a basement, may warrant a case to be deferred to the Rehabilitation Program for further assistance based on the type of heating system in the home. Structural repairs must be completed before heating system repairs or replacement can begin to ensure worker safety and avoid damage to the new heating system unit.

Clients will be served on a first-come, first-served basis through the Weatherization Office as they qualify and as funds are available. If clients do not qualify for weatherization, or if weatherization no-heat funds are exhausted, then clients will be referred to the Division of Homeownership and Housing Preservation’s Office of Rehabilitation Services for assessment and underwriting for a deferred loan for furnace repair or replacement.

- **Heating systems tagged by BCFD or BGE for leaks:**
DHCD can also assist in cases that meet the income eligibility where either BCFD or BGE has tagged the heating system for emitting high levels of carbon monoxide (CO) or homes with a tagged gas meter for leaks. The process is like repairing or replacing non-working or dangerous heating systems: an inspector will assess the whole house and expedite any heating work that may be needed, up to and including replacement, as long as the applicant meets the application requirements for weatherization.

For program eligibility information, please visit: <https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/hho/weatherization-and-repairs> or <https://portal.neighborlysoftware.com/BALTIMOREMD/participant> for the online application.

3. Complex Cold Emergency and Additional Response Measures

In an extended period of extreme cold that becomes a complex emergency, the Code Blue Extreme Cold Planning Committee will discuss additional measures to protect citizens. Additional events may compound the emergency so that the definition of “vulnerable population” may expand to include those who would not normally be at risk. Compounding events may include large scale infrastructure failure such as frozen or broken utility lines.

The Health Commissioner, in consultation with the Director of the MOHS and the Director of the OEM, will call a planning meeting if a cold weather emergency becomes complex and additional response measures are required. Additional response measures may include steps to:

- Increase surveillance, outreach, and vigilance, particularly for those vulnerable populations or persons with special needs—especially during large power outages.
- Mobilize neighborhood leaders to check on and assist vulnerable individuals in targeted locations. This may be conducted as a door-knocking campaign with city employees and will connect vulnerable individuals to the services listed above that they need and are eligible for.
- Request that private homeless shelters allow clients to remain indoors during daytime hours.
- Increase surveillance of power outages, particularly to vulnerable facilities.
- Request assistance from the private sector in providing and distributing provisions such as hot food/drink, socks or blankets.
- Suspend any evaluation for long-term housing for the homeless population on the streets, and instead actively seek out to offer them warm shelter.
- At the DHCD, the weatherization program may offer services for households that do not meet the eligibility criteria, especially if there are vulnerable individuals involved (e.g., the very old or very young). This will be done on a case-by-case basis.
- During an emergency or surge in volume, DHCD’s Community Services Office and Weatherization Office will work closely together to share personnel and resources for the best and quickest response.
- Discourage outdoor public gatherings.
- If there is an area of the City that may be without water or power for an extended period of time, open a temporary emergency shelter. Power outages can be monitored via BGE’s outage map <https://www.bge.com/Outages/CheckOutageStatus/Pages/OutageMap.aspx> or MEMA’s OSPREY: <http://mema.maryland.gov/Pages/Osprey.aspx>.

4. Outreach and Awareness

The City will aim to reduce cold-related mortality and morbidity by increasing awareness of the health risks that extreme cold poses to vulnerable populations. Outreach will target the most at-risk audiences with important health messages and will also provide a call to action for local support networks and the media to protect Baltimore citizens, especially those most at risk.

4.1. Mass Media**A. Press Release**

On or after November 15th, but prior to the first Code Blue Extreme Cold declaration, a press release will be distributed by BCHD's Communications Director as a general reminder about the approaching cold weather season. The press release will include tips on how to stay safe in the cold weather, including messages about outdoor safety in inclement weather and the importance of monitoring neighbors and loved ones.

BCHD will issue a press release on days when a Code Blue Extreme Cold declaration is made. Distribution for the press releases will include media outlets, the Code Blue Extreme Cold notification list, the Health Department and City government (Mayor's Office) websites, social media platforms, and other appropriate avenues at the discretion of BCHD's Communications Director.

B. Health Education and Outreach Literature

The City will distribute general snow and cold weather health education literature to vulnerable populations and at various outreach events. The literature will contain information about preparing for snow (preventing falls, preparing against being stuck in the car or in the house), and emergency safety information for winter (use of generators, candles, etc.) and information about the city services outlined above.

4.2. Mass Communications**A. Email Alerts**

BCHD Aging and CARE Services and MOHS will issue email alerts on Code Blue Extreme Cold days to organizations serving seniors and those experiencing homelessness, respectively, instructing them to advise older adults to keep warm and safe, informing them of the harmful effects of extreme cold, and advising that they stay indoors in heated environments. This will include all Interagency Committee (IAC) on Aging partners, local Assisted Living Providers, Adult Day Care programs, homeless shelters, and nursing homes.

- Outbound Calling Systems
 - BCHD Aging and CARE Services will conduct automated call-outs to seniors using the BMORE ALERT notification system when there is a Code Blue Extreme Cold day or a series of Code Blue Extreme Cold days expected to be declared.
- 311 and 211
 - BCHD Aging and CARE will field calls from 8:30am – 4:30pm Monday-Friday. 211 MD United Way Helpline will take calls after hours and on weekends.
 - Citizens may call 311 for information about extreme cold-related illness and risk factors.
 - Citizens may call 311 to report homeless individuals who are outdoors for prolonged periods during severe winter weather and who appear vulnerable or ill.

- Citizens can also put a “no heat” service request through 311 if they have no heat in their house. An assessment of the house and their eligibility will be made within 48 hours.
- 311 operators will also provide other winter weather preparedness and safety tips.
- Information on homeless shelters is available through the 211 hotline.
- City Hall Operator
 - Citizens may call the operator for information about cold-related illness and risk factors and City Operators will enter call information into the CSR system.
 - The operators will also provide other winter weather preparedness and safety tips.

4.3. Neighborhood Outreach

The Mayor’s Office of Neighborhoods (MON) will disseminate cold weather-related information to community associations and community-based organizations.

The MOHS will ensure that homeless outreach teams operating across the City are notified when a Code Blue Extreme Cold Alert is made. These teams will canvass known “hotspots” to offer vulnerable individuals transportation to shelter. Homeless Services will ensure that 311 requests for outreach to vulnerable individuals are filled by partner outreach agencies.

BCFD will distribute extreme cold safety and energy assistance information as a part of its normal day-to-day operations/home visits. They will educate communities about the risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning since people are known to light fires at home or in vacant properties to stay warm.

5. Coordination and Tracking

5.1. Service Request and Delivery Process

The City’s policy and public statements will be consistent in encouraging citizens to call 311 and only 311 for all non-emergency cold-related inquiries and complaints (other than BGE power outages). Calls from the public to report cold-related problems or request cold-related services may be received at the following numbers:

311

410-396-3100 or 443-263-2220

410-396-CARE (2273)

211 MD United Way Helpline, for shelter info and after-hours CARE Services

Power Outages: 1-877-778-2222

311

311 will field calls from 6am to 10pm, 7 days per week. For cold-related inquiries and service requests, it will generate tracking and immediately close an “ECC-Information Request” Service Request (SR). This will create a record of citizen requests for tracking purposes. In addition, 311 call-takers will provide information specific to the caller’s request, as follows:

Information Calls: Homeless Shelter Locations, Hours and Code Blue Extreme Cold Declaration

Vulnerable Populations: Check on vulnerable neighbors (transfer to BPD non-emergency) or homeless persons (transfer to homeless services)

Service Requests: No Heat, Weatherization or Tenant complaints (no heat)

410-396-3100

The City Hall Operator will field calls directly Monday-Friday from 6am to midnight, and through a prompt-based system from midnight to 6am during the week and on weekends. All requests related to Code Blue Extreme Cold Alerts will be referred to the 311 Call Center.

410-396-CARE (2273)

Aging and CARE phone lines will automatically roll over to 211/MD United Way Helpline (a private non-profit) after hours (4:30 pm -8:30 am), on weekends and on holidays. Additional information on Code Blue Extreme Cold related policy will be provided as needed.

5.2. Monitoring and Evaluation

Data to be tracked as indicators of the effectiveness of the Baltimore City Code Blue Extreme Cold program:

- BCHD will obtain information from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) on hypothermia-related deaths via the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and work in conjunction with the MDH Office of Preparedness and Response to review and share available data.
- BCHD will obtain information from ESSENCE regarding hospital admissions for hypothermia and cold-related illness. BCHD will also track hypothermia-related EMS runs.
- BCFD will track any incidents and injuries resulting from lack of heat, such as carbon monoxide poisoning from generators.
- BCHD Division of Aging and CARE Services will track the number of emergency meals distributed to seniors
- The Salvation Army will track the number of hot drinks and other provisions distributed on Code Blue Extreme Cold days.
- 311 and Municipal Telephone Exchange (MTE) will report the daily number of information calls, vulnerable people call-ins, and cold-related service request received.
- DHCD Weatherization Office will report the total number of service requests received during the Code Blue Extreme Cold season, and if possible, will note the reason for the call under a few categories (e.g., non-payment, equipment failure, tagged by BCFD, or required operating education). When Code Blue Extreme Cold days are declared, the office will track how many requests were responded to as emergency calls.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1. Lead Agency**A. BCHD**

- 1) Convene and organize the Code Blue Extreme Cold Planning Committee and update the Code Blue Extreme Cold Plan annually.
- 2) Maintain and monitor cold-related data to identify trends that may indicate a need for additional response and request additional resources as needed.
- 3) Communicate Code Blue Extreme Cold information via traditional media, social media, and electronic communications.
- 4) Provide health tips and encourage local resilience against the cold weather throughout the season.
- 5) Obtain data from OCME on cold-related deaths.
- 6) Obtain cold-related Emergency Department (ED) admissions data.
- 7) Track hypothermia related EMS calls.
- 8) Provide automated call-outs to seniors via BMORE ALERT, a mass notification system.
- 9) CARE Services will provide seniors with resources to complete energy assistance applications (410-396-CARE).

6.2. Core Organizations**A. BCCAP**

- 1) Offer case management services to families and individuals at the Community Action Partnership Center to connect those willing to engage with services based upon their identified need.
- 2) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

B. BCFD

- 1) Track cold weather-related injuries/incidents (e.g., carbon monoxide poisoning, fire).
- 2) Distribute Code Blue Extreme Cold and emergency assistance literature during home visits.
- 3) Increase the number of EMS crews in service as necessary.
- 4) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

B. BCIT

- 1) Provide information and track Code Blue Extreme Cold inquiries to 311.
- 2) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

C. BPD

- 1) Relay public messaging to homeless and vulnerable citizens encountered on patrol.
- 2) Dispatch officers to check on vulnerable citizens based on 311 calls.
- 3) Distribute Code Blue Extreme Cold literature at District Offices.

- 4) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

D. DHCD

- 1) Pull "No Heat" service requests from 311 database and assess caller home heating.
- 2) Increase outreach efforts on Code Blue Extreme Cold days.
- 3) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

E. MOHS

- 1) Develop the Winter Shelter Plan.
- 2) During Code Blue Extreme Cold days, City-funded shelters will increase their capacity and shelter-in-place to ensure any individual experiencing homelessness will be accommodated. Private homeless shelters will be encouraged to extend their hours and keep individuals indoors.
- 3) Coordinate with the homeless outreach teams to provide information regarding shelter services and winter safety.
- 4) Coordinate with the homeless outreach teams to canvass known "hotspots" on Code Blue Extreme Cold days and respond to 311 requests for outreach to vulnerable homeless individuals.
- 5) Refer clients with behavioral health needs to the Crisis Information & Referral Line.
- 6) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

F. MON

- 1) Distribute Code Blue Extreme Cold press releases and other information to community organizations via email and other mechanisms.
- 2) Mobilize neighborhood leaders to assist and check on vulnerable individuals in targeted locations as needed.
- 3) Provide information about winter weather hazards and Code Blue Extreme Cold in neighborhood newsletters.
- 4) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

G. OEM

- 1) Assist BCHD in the activation of additional cold weather resources as needed.
- 2) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

6.3. Support Organizations**A. BHSB**

- 1) Work in collaboration with MOHS to coordinate with the homeless outreach teams to canvass "known" hotspots on Code Blue Extreme Cold days and respond to 311 requests for outreach to vulnerable homeless individuals.

- 2) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

B. DOP

- 1) Provide sheltering, winter safety and Code Blue Extreme Cold information to Resiliency Hubs.
- 2) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

C. HCAM

- 1) Receive referrals from hospital emergency departments/other healthcare facilities.
- 2) Advocates assess each client to connect them to health insurance and wraparound housing services.

D. Salvation Army

- 1) Set up canteen service to provide hot drinks and other items available to help keep persons warm on nights following a Code Blue Extreme Cold declaration.
- 2) Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

7. Plan Maintenance

1. BCHD shall maintain this plan and organize an annual review by the Code Blue Extreme Cold Planning Committee no later than November 1 of each year.
2. Based on the findings of annual reviews, BCHD shall coordinate plan revisions as necessary.
3. Agencies' internal procedures to execute their responsibilities under this plan shall be reviewed annually by the respective agencies no later than November 15 of each year.
4. Participating agencies are responsible for notifying BCHD if policies or procedures that substantively affect this plan are modified.