



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 18, 2019

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL, CITY OF CHICAGO OFFICIALS PROVIDE UPDATE ON WINTER STORM
PREPAREDNESS EFFORTS**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and City of Chicago officials today provided an update on the City's response to snow expected to arrive in Chicago. A coordinated citywide response continues to focus on keeping residents – especially those most vulnerable – safe and warm as frigid temperatures and snow is expected to continue into the weekend.

"Chicago is no stranger to winter weather and the City is prepared to work tirelessly to make sure residents are safe," Mayor Emanuel said. "I ask everyone to exercise good judgment and remain indoors if at all possible, to take the warnings and advisories seriously, and to check on the well-being of family, friends and neighbors."

Multiple departments and agencies are working to provide a constant assessment of the situation across the city to ensure the safety of residents as Chicago continues to feel the impact of the snow accumulation.

"I want to thank all of the city workers for their efforts to make sure our city keeps moving and our residents have access to vital city services when needed most. And most of all, I want to thank all Chicagoans ahead of time for their patience and cooperation," Mayor Emanuel added.

The Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS) will continue to monitor weather and ground conditions from the City's Snow Command Center during this winter storm. DSS will deploy salt spreaders from its fleet to remove snow and spread salt to ensure streets are safe and passable for motorists and emergency vehicles.

"Our top priority is safety," DSS Commissioner John Tully said. "While we encourage residents to avoid driving in inclement weather if possible, our crews will continue working throughout the duration of this storm to keep roads safe for motorists and buses that need to travel in these conditions."

During every snow event, crews work to ensure arterial streets and Lake Shore Drive are clear and safe to keep the City's major roadways accessible for buses, vital services and emergency vehicles. Crews will plow residential streets as needed once the snow stops and the main roads are clear.

AIRPORTS

"Chicago's airports are well prepared for this evening's snow, with crews working hard to minimize the impact of weather on our operations," CDA Commissioner Jamie L. Rhee said. "Our dedicated snow teams at O'Hare and Midway will work around the clock, in coordination with our airline partners, to keep runways open for safe and efficient flight operations. As always, we encourage passengers to check flight status with their airlines ahead of time and to arrive early before scheduled flights."

The CDA has a full crew of snow teams, led by more than 500 city employees, standing by to keep runway conditions open and operational. Snow teams will work overnight, operating over 350 pieces of equipment to keep the runways and taxiways at O'Hare and Midway safe and dry. Both airports are fully stocked with supplies, including over 6,000 tons of salt and over 450,000 gallons of deicer fluid to serve the airports. As of 2:30p.m. today, airlines are reporting delays averaging less than 15 minutes at both airports. Due to overnight snow, potentially windy conditions, and the chance of lake effect snow over the weekend, airlines have proactively cancelled more than 180 flights at O'Hare (out of over 2,400 total), and nearly 100 flights at Midway (out of over 500 total). Travelers are encouraged to contact airlines on flight status ahead of time, and to arrive 2 hours before domestic flights, and 3 hours early for international flights.

CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) will be providing normal service today and over the weekend, with trains and buses running as close to schedule as possible. Though CTA extensively prepares its trains and buses for winter weather and snow, unpredictable conditions can sometimes cause delays. CTA advises customers to allow extra travel time, and strongly recommends customers get up-to-date service information via the CTA web site transitchicago.com, on Twitter @CTA, or by signing up for subscription text/email alerts. Riders are also encouraged to use CTA Bus and Train Tracker for estimated arrival times, which can be accessed via mobile phones and on digital displays at rail stations and bus stops.

FAMILY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

"As with all extreme weather, we encourage you to take care of your family and neighbors, particularly seniors," DFSS Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler said. "You can request a well-being check or gain access to the City's network of facilities that serve as warming centers by calling 311."

Those seeking access to warming centers and/or experiencing insufficient heat can visit one of six regional DFSS Community Service Centers that double as warming centers. These Community Service Centers are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Garfield Community Service Center at 10 South Kedzie is open on a 24-hour basis to connect families and residents to emergency shelters. To connect to a location, residents can call 311 for immediate assistance.

In addition, the City has a network of facilities that serve as warming centers, which include Chicago Public Library branches. Libraries will be open during normal hours, which vary by branch.

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Chicago Department of Public Health reminds residents to take extra precautions to stay warm and avoid hypothermia and frostbite. Residents should avoid unnecessary trips outside, and if it is necessary to go outside, wear several loose fitting layers of warm clothing. When shoveling snow, work slowly and take frequent breaks to avoid exhaustion. Be sure to winterize your home and vehicles, and keep cell phones charged with extra batteries for emergencies.

FIRE SAFETY TIPS

The Chicago Fire Department does not recommend that residents use space heaters, but acknowledges that people may rely on them during cold winter months. To minimize the dangers of space heaters, the Fire Department recommends only using heaters that are UL certified as safe and never use an extension cord with a space heater, which can cause the cord to overheat and burn. Most importantly, never allow a space heater within three feet of anything that can burn, especially bedding.

“During cold weather we experience an increase in fire incidents. Too often, we find no working smoke detector or no smoke detector at all in many of the homes where serious injury or fire deaths have occurred,” Fire Commissioner Richard C. Ford II said. “Smoke detectors provide a warning for families to escape which in turn saves lives.”

Fire officials also encouraged residents to check their carbon monoxide detectors are working properly. With furnaces running during normal cold weather a small carbon monoxide leak might not be noticed, but with heaters running non-stop to match the extreme cold, that small leak could become a deadly source of fumes. Carbon Monoxide detectors are designed to alert you before you feel sick, so if yours goes off get to fresh air and call 911.

DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

During extreme weather the Department of Buildings focuses its efforts on complaints from tenants regarding inadequate heat and reassigns inspectors to make sure these complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible.

If a tenant is without heat, they should first contact their landlord and then call 311 to report the issue. The Department of Buildings enforces the Chicago Heat Ordinance, which mandates that the temperature inside a rental residence is at least 68 degrees from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. and 66 degrees at night. Landlords face fines of up to \$500 per day, per violation, for each day they do not supply adequate heat.

Since the start of heat season on September 15, the Department of Buildings has received more than 3,400 heat complaints. The department will be closely monitoring heat-related complaints during this weekend and for the remainder of the winter season. At this time, there are no reports of conditions that have warranted emergency relocation.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) is responsible for clearing snow from protected bike lanes, downtown bridge decks and some expressway overpasses. In addition, CDOT's right of way inspectors are responsible for enforcement of sidewalk snow removal regulations.

The City's snow clearing ordinance requires property owners to clear a path at least 5 feet wide on all sidewalks adjacent to their property, including any crosswalk ramps. Snow should not be shoveled into the right-of-way, which includes: transit stops and bus pads, parking spaces, bike lanes, bike racks, Divvy stations and any other space where snow impedes traffic of any kind. Individuals found pushing snow into the public right of way may be subject to a citation. If you are responsible for a corner lot, you must remove snow and ice from sidewalks on all sides of your building and from corner sidewalk ramps. This applies to residential property and business owners.

DEPARTMENT OF WATER MANAGEMENT

The Department of Water Management adds additional crews during the extreme cold to address any issues that may arise.

To help prevent frozen water pipes, residents should keep a trickle of water running through at least one faucet and allow heat to circulate where water pipes are exposed. If pipes do freeze, use a heating pad or blow dryer to thaw them. Residents should never use open flames for thawing as this creates a fire hazard.

CHICAGO ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL

Chicago Animal Care and Control strongly recommends keeping companion animals inside the home. No matter what the temperature, windchill can threaten a pet's life. Most dogs, and all cats, are safer indoors, except when taken out for exercise. Regardless of the season, shorthaired, very young or old dogs and all cats should never be left outside without supervision. The salt and other chemicals used to melt snow and ice can irritate the pads of your pet's feet, so when they are taken outside, wipe the feet with a damp towel afterwards.

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