



# Baltimore City Code Blue Extreme Cold Plan

*Version 2*

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### 1. Summary

Baltimore City's Code Blue Extreme Cold Program establishes a coordinated approach to provide relief from extreme cold weather to vulnerable populations in Baltimore City during the winter season. The response period is from November 15<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup> the most significant risk occurring 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, various literature sources, and reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the vulnerable populations targeted by this plan include:

- Older adults with inadequate food, clothing, or heating
- Babies sleeping in cold bedrooms
- people who remain outdoors for long periods – people experiencing homelessness, hikers, etc.
- People who drink alcohol or use drugs
- Those who have poor blood circulation
- Individuals who are not properly dressed for extremely cold temperatures

### 2. Activation

The Health Commissioner declares a **Blue Extreme Cold** alert 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, extended period of cold, sudden cold after a warm period) deemed by the Commissioner of Health to be severe enough to present a substantial threat to the life or health of vulnerable Baltimore residents.

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 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).

### 3. Services

### *Shelter*

The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) has a [FY 26 Winter Shelter & Code Purple Plan](#) to address the shelter needs of individuals experiencing homelessness during the winter months, from November 15<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup>. When the temperature with wind chill reaches 32°F or below, MOHS will issue a Winter Shelter Declaration, allowing any individual experiencing homelessness to access City-funded shelters. This declaration will expand shelter capacity to ensure that any individual experiencing homelessness and seeking shelter will be accommodated. On Code Blue Extreme Cold days, City-funded shelter sites will shelter-in-place to ensure that any individual experiencing homelessness can remain inside. City-funded shelters will also expand their capacity to ensure that any individual experiencing homelessness and seeking shelter on Code Blue Extreme Cold days has access to it. The City will also encourage private homeless shelters to open for extended hours. During a Winter Shelter Declaration, City-funded shelters will expand their capacity to ensure that any individual experiencing homelessness can find shelter or more permanent housing year-round through private non-profits.

MOHS also provides residents who are re-entering society from prison terms with information and resources.

The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) is responsible for issuing Winter Shelter declarations and communicating with shelter providers, non-profit organizations, Baltimore City hospitals, and the 311 hotline to ensure that information is disseminated to those experiencing homelessness.

MOHS is also responsible for coordinating bed utilization of all City-funded shelters during a Winter Shelter Declaration. [Find information about winter sheltering on MOHS' website](#)

### *Behavioral Health*

Behavioral health refers to an individual's overall emotional and mental well-being. The term encompasses both mental health and substance use disorders.

Individuals and families in need of behavioral health services can call or text 988 to connect with a counselor who will listen, provide emotional support, and offer information and resources. The 988 Helpline operates 24/7 and provides free, confidential care. Most people who call 988 get immediate relief and have their needs met over the phone. If there is a need for urgent in-person services, Mobile Crisis Services are available and can be accessed by calling 988. Mobile Crisis Services operate 24/7, and teams are comprised of a licensed, credentialed clinician and a person with lived experience.

### *Meals*

Eating Together meals will be served at the community congregate meal sites. Meals will continue to be delivered to congregate meal sites and residential sites in the event of bad weather. If the weather is predicted to be extreme, shelf-stable or frozen meals will be provided to all participants when deliveries cannot be made. BCHD Aging 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 Salvation Army will continue to operate its FEEDMORE program, a mobile canteen soup kitchen that provides evening meals to individuals experiencing homelessness, Monday through Saturday. On nights when Code Blue Extreme Cold has been declared, the Salvation Army will take the canteen out and provide hot drinks and other available items to keep people warm.

### *Energy Assistance Program*

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

- Online at <https://www.bmorechildren.com/residents>
- Call 410-396-5555
- Complete an application in person at one of the five CAP Center locations
- 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 21213
  - 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

The Maryland Department of Human Resources, through the Baltimore City Community Action Partnership (BCCAP) - Office of Home Energy Programs, provides more information at <http://dhs.maryland.gov/office-of-home-energy-programs/>, including guidelines and an online application form.

Baltimore City Community Action Partnership (BCCAP) staff can assist residents with completing applications and provide 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 [ohcp@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:ohcp@baltimorecity.gov)

### *“No Heat” Home Repair Services*

This service can be requested through 311 as a “no heat” request or through the [online portal](#) starting November 1<sup>st</sup>.

The following services are available:

- **Repair or replacement of non-working or dangerous heating systems:**

A Homeownership & Housing Preservation staff member will be assigned within 48 hours to do an initial intake and a no-heat phone assessment. A pre-application form will be completed via telephone, and a referral to the *Weatherization Assistance Program Office of Rehabilitation* will be made. The time frame for work will depend on which of the limited funding sources is available at the time the referral is made.

If referred to the *Weatherization Assistance Program*, the house must be in good overall condition (e.g., no roof leaks, major structural defects, etc.). Severe weather or issues like a flooded basement or water/sewer line break may require referral to the Rehabilitation Program for additional assistance, depending on your home’s heating system. Structural repairs must be completed before heating system repairs or replacement can begin to ensure workers’ safety and avoid damage to the new heating system unit.

Clients will be served on a first-come, first-served basis through the *Weatherization Assistance Program* or the *Office of Rehabilitation*, as they qualify and funds become available. If clients are ineligible for weatherization or if no-heat funds have been depleted, consideration may be given to help avoid service deferral. If necessary, clients may also be referred to the Division of Homeownership and Housing Preservation’s Office of Rehabilitation to assess and underwrite a deferred loan for furnace repair or replacement.

- **Heating systems tagged by BCFD or BGE for leaks:**

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) also provides assistance when households meet income requirements and either BCFD or BGE identifies a heating system emitting high levels of carbon monoxide (CO) or a gas meter tagged for leaks. The process is similar to repairing or replacing non-working or hazardous heating systems: an

## Baltimore City Code Blue Extreme Cold Plan

inspector will assess the entire house and recommend any necessary heating work, up to and including replacement, if the applicant meets the weatherization application requirements. In all cases where high CO or gas leaks are discovered during a home energy audit, immediate action will be taken to resolve the emergency issues.

For further information, please visit:

[Weatherization and Energy Efficiency | Baltimore City Department of Housing & Community Development](#), or

<https://portal.neighborlysoftware.com/BaltimoreMD/participant> for an online application

## 4. Complex Cold Emergency and Additional Response Measures

In the event of an extended period of extreme cold that escalates into a complex emergency, the Code Blue Extreme Cold Planning Committee will discuss additional measures to protect residents. Additional events may exacerbate the emergency, causing the definition of “vulnerable population” to 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 Mayor’s Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) and the Director of the Office of Emergency Management (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:

- Initiate a Watch-level, or Full Activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as deemed necessary to coordinate resources for compounding incidents.
- Increase surveillance, outreach, and vigilance, particularly for those vulnerable populations or persons with special needs, especially during significant power outages.
- Mobilize neighborhood leaders to check on and assist vulnerable individuals in targeted locations. This may be conducted as a door-to-door campaign with city employees, connecting vulnerable individuals to services 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.

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- 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 to offer them warm shelter.
- At DHCD, the Office of Homeownership & Housing Preservation 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 Division of Homeownership & Housing Preservation 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](#) or Maryland Department of Emergency Management's (MDEM) OSPREY: <https://geodata.md.gov/ospreypublic/>

## 5. Outreach and Awareness

The City aims to reduce cold-related mortality and morbidity by increasing awareness of the health risks posed by extreme cold to vulnerable populations. Outreach will target the 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 residents, particularly those most vulnerable.

### *Mass Media*

#### **Press Release**

On or after November 15<sup>th</sup>, but prior to the first Code Blue Extreme Cold alert, a press release will be distributed by BCHD's PIO 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 PIO.



### ***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 for 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.

### ***Mass Communications***

#### ***Email Alerts***

Homeless Services at MOHS will issue email alerts on Code Blue Extreme Cold days to organizations serving individuals experiencing homelessness, instructing them to stay warm and safe, informing them of the harmful effects of extreme cold, and advising them to stay indoors in heated environments. This will include all homeless shelters.

- Outbound calling systems  
BCHD Aging will conduct automated call-outs to older adults using the BMORE ALERT notification system when a Code Blue Extreme Cold day is declared or a series of Code Blue Extreme Cold days is expected to be declared.
- 311
  - BCHD Aging will field calls from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm Monday-Friday. Calls received after hours will be directed to voicemail. Staff will return messages during regular business hours.
  - Residents may call 311 for information about extreme cold-related illness and risk factors.
  - Residents may call 311 to report individuals experiencing homelessness who are outdoors for prolonged periods during severe winter weather and who appear vulnerable or ill.
    - 311 will contact MOHS and BHSB to relay information
  - Residents can also put a “no heat” service request through 311 if they have no heat in their house. An assessment of the house and its eligibility will be made within 48 hours.
  - 311 operators will also provide other winter weather preparedness and safety tips.
- City Hall Operator
  - Residents 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.

### *Neighborhood Outreach*

The Mayor's Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) will disseminate cold-weather-related information to community associations and community-based organizations.

The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (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 transportation to vulnerable individuals seeking shelter. Homeless Services will ensure that partner outreach agencies fill 311 requests for outreach to vulnerable individuals.

The Baltimore City Fire Department (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 risks of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning, as people are known to light fires at home or in vacant properties to stay warm.

## **6. Coordination and Tracking**

### *Service Request and Delivery Process*

The City's policy and public statements will be consistent in encouraging residents 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 one of the following numbers:

- 311
- City Hall Operator: 410-396-3100 or 443-263-2220
- BCHD Aging: 410-396-CARE (2273)
- BG&E (to report power outages): 1-877-778-2222

#### **311**

311 will field calls from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., 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 resident 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 people experiencing homelessness (transfer to homeless services)

Service Requests:

- No Heat (Weatherization Assistance Program) or
- Tenant complaints (Ombudsman)

#### **410-396-3100**

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The City Hall Operator will field calls directly Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and through a prompt-based system from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. during the week and on all weekend hours. All requests related to Code Blue Extreme Cold Alerts will be referred to the 311 Call Center.

### ***410-396-CARE (2273)***

BCHD Aging will respond to calls Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Calls received after hours will be directed to voicemail. Staff will return messages during regular business hours. Additional information on Code Blue Extreme Cold-related policy will be provided as needed.

## *Monitoring and Evaluation*

Data to be tracked as indicators of the impact of extreme cold in Baltimore City:

- 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 will 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 illnesses. BCHD will also track hypothermia-related EMS calls.
- BCHD Division of Aging will track the number of emergency meals distributed to older adults.
- The Salvation Army will track the number of hot drinks and other provisions distributed on Code Blue Extreme Cold days.
- 311 will report the daily number of information calls, vulnerable people call-ins, and cold-related service requests received.
- Department of Housing and Community Development's Division of Homeownership & Housing Preservation 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 the number of requests responded to as emergency calls.
- MOCFS - BCCAP will report the number of households with energy shut off during the Code Blue Extreme Season.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **1. Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD)**

#### **Baltimore City Health Department**

*Michelle Taylor, MD, DrPH, MPA, Commissioner of Health*

## **Baltimore City Code Blue Extreme Cold Plan**

- a. Convene and organize the Code Blue Extreme Cold Planning Committee and update the Code Blue Extreme Cold Plan annually.
- b. Maintain and monitor cold-related data to identify trends that may indicate the need for additional response and request additional resources as needed.
- c. Communicate Code Blue Extreme Cold information via traditional media, social media, and electronic communications.
- d. Provide health tips and encourage local resilience against the cold weather throughout the season.
- e. Obtain data from OCME on cold-related deaths.
- f. Obtain cold-related Emergency Department (ED) admissions data.
- g. Track hypothermia-related EMS calls.
- h. Provide automated call-outs to older adults via BMORE ALERT, a mass notification system during periods of extreme cold.
- i. BCHD Aging will provide older adults with resources to complete energy assistance applications (410-396-2273).

### **2. Baltimore City Community Action Partnership (BCCAP)**

- a. 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 needs.
- b. Assist with Energy Assistance applications.
- c. Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

### **3. Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD)**

- a. Distribute Code Blue Extreme Cold and energy assistance literature during home visits.
- b. Increase the number of EMS crews in service as necessary.
- c. Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

### **4. Baltimore City 311 Services**

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

### **5. Baltimore Police Department (BPD)**

- a. Relay public messaging to homeless and vulnerable residents encountered on patrol.
- b. Dispatch officers to check on vulnerable residents based on 311 calls.
- c. Distribute Code Blue Extreme Cold literature at District Offices.
- d. Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

### **6. Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB)**

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- a. 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.
- b. Share BCHD’s social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

### **7. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)**

- a. Pull “No heat” service requests from the 311 database, assess the caller's home heating, and follow up on MD DHCD requests.
- b. Increase outreach efforts on Code Blue Extreme Cold days.
- c. Share BCHD’s social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

### **8. Department of Planning**

- a. Provide sheltering, winter safety, and Code Blue Extreme Cold information to Resiliency Hubs.
- b. Share BCHD’s social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.
- c. Connect city agencies with Community Resiliency Hub partners as when there is a role that resiliency hubs can play in the Code Blue Extreme Cold response.

### **9. HealthCare Access Maryland**

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

### **10. Mayor’s Office of Community Affairs (MOCA)**

- a. Distribute Code Blue Extreme Cold press releases and other information to community organizations via email and other mechanisms.
- b. Mobilize neighborhood leaders to assist and check on vulnerable individuals in targeted locations as needed.
- c. Share BCHD’s social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

### **11. Mayor’s Office of Homeless Services (MOHS)**

- a. Develop Baltimore City’s Winter Shelter Plan.
- b. 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.
- c. Coordinate with the homeless outreach teams to provide information regarding shelter services and winter safety.
- d. 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.

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- e. Refer clients with behavioral health needs to Call 988.
- f. Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

### **12. Office of Emergency Management (OEM)**

- a. Assist BCHD in activating additional cold-weather resources as needed.
- b. Lead complex extreme cold incident response when additional emergency needs are happening in addition to extreme cold.
- c. Share BCHD's social media messaging during Code Blue Extreme Cold declarations.

### **13. Salvation Army**

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

## **8. 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.



## 9. Health Education and Literature

### *Baltimore City Health Department Winter Weather Safety Tips*

# Baltimore City Health Department **ARE YOU PREPARED FOR WINTER WEATHER?**

Cold weather can be dangerous – especially for older adults, young children, and people with health conditions. Take steps now to prepare for a safe and warm winter



### STAY WARM



- Dress in layers, including hats, gloves, and waterproof boots
- Limit time outdoors in extreme cold
- Keep extra blankets and warm clothing in your car
- Never use ovens or grills to heat your home
  - This can cause deadly carbon monoxide poisoning



### STAY INFORMED

- Sign up for the Baltimore City [Bmore Alert Notification System](#)
- Check local news or follow  @BaltimoreHealthy and  BaltimoreCityHealthDepartment

### STAY PREPARED



- Keep an emergency kit with flashlights, batteries, non-perishable food, water, and medications
- Make a plan to check on older neighbors, relatives and those with disabilities
- Protect pets – bring them indoors during freezing temperatures



Health.BaltimoreCity.gov

# SNOW SHOVELING SAFETY TIPS

- Dress warmly and work slowly.
- Shovel early and often.
- Push the snow instead of lifting it.
- If you must lift the snow, lift with your legs.
- Never remove deep snow all at once; do it piecemeal. Shovel an inch or two, then take another inch off. Rest, and repeat if necessary.
- **Pace yourself.** Shoveling snow is an aerobic activity. Take frequent breaks and replenish fluids to prevent dehydration.
- **Listen to your body.** Stop if you feel pain or observe heart attack warning signs that may include chest pain as well as shoulder, neck or arm pain; dizziness, fainting, sweating or nausea; or shortness of breath. If you think you're having a heart attack, seek medical help immediately.

## Those most at risk for a heart attack include:

- Anyone who has already had a heart attack.
- Individuals with a history of heart disease.
- Those with high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels.
- Smokers.
- Individuals leading a sedentary lifestyle.





## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR ENERGY ASSISTANCE?

The most important factors in determining who is eligible for energy assistance are the size of your household and how much money you made in the last 30 days.

- Not completing all sections of the application
- No signature or date on the application
- Missing documents
- Not including all household members
- Not including all income for the past 30 days

Electric bill not in Applicant's name

- A copy of your photo ID
- Proof of everyone's gross (pre-tax) income for the last 30 days
- Proof of where you live (*This can be your utility bill*)
- Copies of Social Security cards for everyone in your household
- A copy of your most recent heating fuel bill or receipt (*if applicable*)
- Copy of your most recent Utility bill or termination notice (*if applicable*)

- All energy assistance dollars are grants. You do not have to pay back a grant.
- Grant amounts are calculated based on your income from the last 30 days and your fuel type.
- Make sure you submit all of your supporting documents with your energy assistance application. Missing documents or signatures WILL delay your application.
- Continue to make payments on all your electric and heating bills. Energy Assistance will not cover your whole bill.



**For information call toll free:  
1-800-332-6347 (en Español también)**

**TTY for the hearing impaired call:**

1-800-735-2258

Check out our website at:

[www.dhs.maryland.gov/energy](http://www.dhs.maryland.gov/energy)

**Apply online at:**

<https://marylandbenefits.gov>

### To Report Fraud:

Call 1-800-332-6347 and select the Welfare Fraud hotline option

DHS FIA 801 - OHEP Brochure - English

# Can you afford your heating and electric bills?

Apply today for  
help with your heating  
and electric costs!

For information call toll free:  
1-800-332-6347 (en Español también)  
Effective July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026





### Income Eligibility Limits

Effective July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

FY26 Income Guidelines for MEAP and EUSP	
HOUSEHOLD SIZE	MONTHLY INCOME LIMITS
1	\$2,608.00
2	\$3,525.00
3	\$4,441.00
4	\$5,358.00
5	\$6,275.00
6	\$7,191.00
7	\$8,108.00
8	\$9,025.00
Each person over 8, add Contact your local OHEP office	

### OHEP

The **Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP)** provides assistance to income-eligible households to help you stay warm, stay connected, and help pay past due energy bills.

### HOW TO APPLY

OHEP is a year-round program. You do not need to have a crisis to qualify. You can apply at any time through any of the following methods:

- Apply online at <https://marylandbenefits.gov> You can also request an application by calling 1-800-332-6347.
- Apply in person at your local energy assistance office.
  - To find the Office of Home Energy Programs nearest you and other information on how to apply, call 1-800-332-6347 or visit our website at [dhs.maryland.gov/energy](https://dhs.maryland.gov/energy).
- Mail in your application by printing and completing an Energy Assistance application. Our application can be found at <http://dhs.maryland.gov/office-of-home-energy-programs/how-do-you-apply/>.
- Home visits can also be arranged for senior citizens or other persons with special medical needs.

### STAY CONNECTED

The **Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP)** is OHEP's electric assistance grant. This grant is available to you once per program year (July- June). Customers who receive EUSP may choose to enroll in budget billing with their utility company, but are not required. Budget Billing is a tool that utility companies provide to help spread out your annual utility bills into even monthly payments and avoid seasonal spikes in your bill.

### CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY

Households that receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) benefits in Maryland are categorically eligible to receive energy assistance and do not need to complete an application or provide additional documentation. We will issue OHEP benefits to categorically eligible households after their SNAP and/or TCA redetermination is approved.

### STAY WARM

The **Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP)** is OHEP's heating assistance grant. This grant is available to you once per program year (July-June). This grant is delivered to your heating or utility company.

### PAY PAST DUE BILLS

The **Arrearage Retirement Assistance grant (ARA)** and the **Gas Arrearage Retirement Assistance grant (GARA)** are OHEP grants designed to help reduce or eliminate past-due electric and/or natural gas bills. To qualify, you must have a past-due bill of at least \$300 in your name and be approved for MEAP and/or EUSP grants. The ARA and GARA grants are only available to you once every five years with certain exceptions. Electric Arrearage benefits provide grants up to \$2000 and Gas Arrearage benefits provide grants up to \$1,000. The size of these grants will depend on the size of your past-due balance.

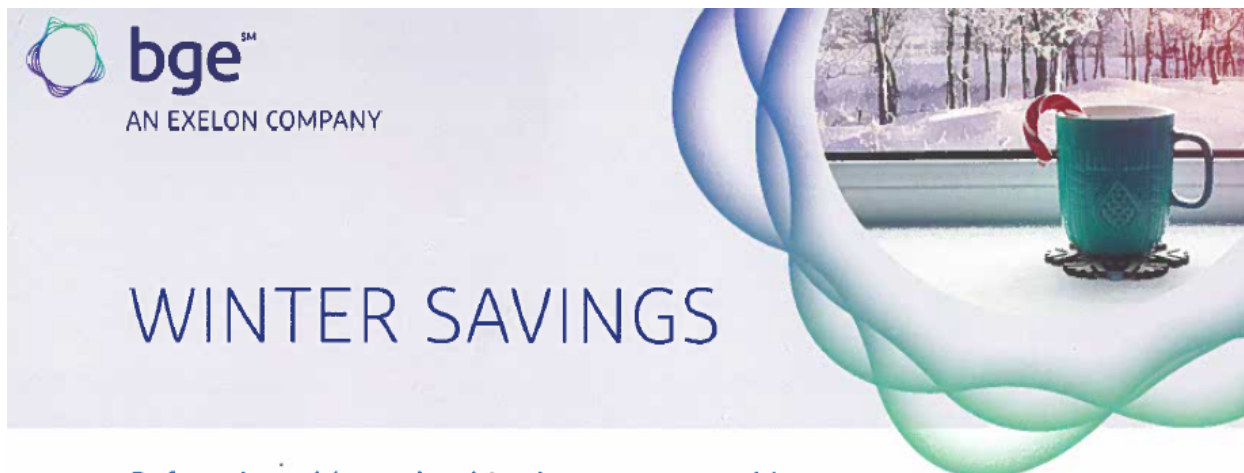
### PROTECT YOUR SERVICES

The **Utility Service Protection Program (USPP)** is designed to protect low-income families from utility turn-offs during the heating season. All MEAP eligible customers may participate in USPP. Participation also requires a year-round even monthly budget billing. Failure to make consecutive payments may result in removal from USPP.

### A MORE EFFICIENT HOME

**Weatherization and Energy Efficiency Services-** Customer information is referred to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for programs that can provide improvements and repairs to homes at no cost. Improvements such as furnace clean and tune, added insulation, and energy efficient light bulbs can help lower utility bills and make the home more comfortable. DHCD's energy efficiency and weatherization programs support the Empower Maryland Energy Efficiency Act. For more information, call 1-855-583-8976 or visit [dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/EnergyEfficiency](http://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/EnergyEfficiency).

### BGE Winter Weather Tips



Before the cold weather hits, here are some things you can do ahead of time that could help reduce energy costs\*:

- **MAINTAIN YOUR HEATING SYSTEM.** Home heating is the single highest energy user. Make sure your heating system is running efficiently by scheduling a service check.
- **LOWER YOUR WATER HEATER SETTING.** Water heating accounts for up to 20% of a typical home's total energy use. Lowering the temperature by 10-15°F can result in a 10% savings in water heating costs.
- **INSULATE WATER HEATER PIPES.** You can save up to 4% annually on energy by insulating hot water pipes, which reduces the amount of energy lost in distribution. As an added benefit, you won't have to wait as long for hot water when you turn on the faucet or shower.
- **USE My Account ONLINE TOOLS.** Your BGE online account provides the tools you need to track your energy usage in near real-time. Compare energy usage trends, measure results of energy-saving practices, and sign-up for usage alerts and reports to let you know when energy usage is trending high.

Once winter is here, check out some of these ways to save\*:

- **USE THE SUN!** Taking advantage of winter sunlight can help make a dent in your heating costs. Open blinds during the day to provide natural lighting and capture free heat. Close them at night to keep the heat in.
- **CHOOSE EFFICIENT LIGHT FIXTURES.** LEDs offer an easy and affordable way to save energy and money, but these lights may not operate as efficiently as possible with light fixtures you already have. Installing specialized, efficient light fixtures will ensure that you receive the best performance possible from LEDs.
- **ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT (if your health permits).** It's simple: set your thermostat to 68°. You can save up to 10% on your heating and cooling by simply turning your thermostat down 7-10°F for eight hours.



To learn more about BGE's ENERGY EFFICIENCY programs, visit [www.BGESmartEnergy.com](http://www.BGESmartEnergy.com).

EmPOWER Maryland programs are funded by a charge on your energy bill. EmPOWER programs can help you reduce your energy consumption and save you money. To learn more about EmPOWER and how you can participate, go to [BGESmartEnergy.com](http://www.BGESmartEnergy.com).



\* Source: [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov)



## *BGE Information for Customers with Special Needs*

Source:

[Special Needs Programs | Baltimore Gas and Electric Company \(bge.com\)](https://www.bge.com/special-needs)

## Special Needs Programs

BGE will attempt to contact those Special Needs customers with a serious illness or that are on life support to notify them of an upcoming planned outage or the possibility of an impending severe storm so the customer may implement back-up plans.



It's **the customer's responsibility** to make appropriate arrangements such as portable generator, battery backup and a contingency plan, such as identifying places where to go for shelter or care in extreme emergencies. Customers with special needs are located throughout our service area and when there are extensive power outages, it's not possible to provide restoration priority to individual customers.

Additionally, BGE will take extra steps to avoid or delay service termination for Special Needs Customers.

If you experience a power outage, please call BGE's power outage number at 1-877-778-2222. To reach our special needs hotline during emergency events, please call 1-877-213-2610

Please see below for additional information about Disaster Preparedness for Special Needs Customers.

### How to Apply

In order to participate, customers with a serious illness or that are on life support must have a physician or certified nurse practitioner submit the required forms below:

[Special Needs Form \[PDF\]](#)

[Special Needs Checklist \[PDF\]](#)

## Baltimore City Code Blue Extreme Cold Plan

Please note:

- Disabled customers must submit a copy of their state certification of disability.
- Elderly must submit proof of age and address.

Please fax forms to 1-443-213-3302, email to [ActiveCollections@exeloncorp.com](mailto:ActiveCollections@exeloncorp.com), or mail to:

Special Needs Room  
720 PO Box 1475  
Baltimore, Maryland 21298-9979

Customers requesting Special Needs status have 30 days to return the appropriate forms. During this period, no collection activity will occur for a customer scheduled to be disconnected. For more information, [contact us](#). TTY/TDD (Maryland Relay Service): 1- 800-735-2258.

### Hospital Program

If you are in the hospital and worried you won't be able to pay your BGE bill, contact a hospital social worker. The social worker will call BGE to delay collection action until you have returned home and recuperated.

### Third-Party Notification

If you are ill, away from home for a long time or unable to handle your own affairs, [you may designate a third party](#) to be notified if your account is in danger of denial.

### Disaster Preparedness

Disaster Preparedness for People With Disabilities has been designed to help people who have physical, visual, auditory, or cognitive disabilities to prepare for natural disasters and their consequences.

Anyone who has a disability or anyone who works with, lives with, or assists a person with a disability can use this booklet. It contains information that can help you organize a personal disaster plan and includes plans for the care of service animals and/or pets during a disaster.

[Disaster Preparedness for People with Special Needs and Persons 65 and Older \(PDF\)](#)  
[Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and other Special Needs \(PDF\)](#)

### Electric Medical Equipment

If you have special medical equipment in your home that requires electricity to function, you may obtain special outage planning information by calling 1-800-685-0123.

## BGE Third Party Notification Program Information

Source: [BGE Third Party Notification Program Application](#)



### BGE's Third Party Notification Program

## Need a Little Extra Peace of Mind?

If you are sick, shut-in or away from home often, it's possible to overlook a utility bill or turn-off notice. To protect your health and safety by preventing any unnecessary disruptions in gas and electric service, BGE offers the voluntary Third Party Notification program.

**Here's how it works:**

- You designate anyone you like – a friend, relative or social service agency – to be your "third party."
- In the event we must notify you that service will be discontinued because of past-due bills, your designated third party will also receive a copy of the notice.
- They can then bring the problem to your attention and perhaps offer aid or advice.
- The third party will not be legally responsible for the overdue bill, nor will this notification by itself prevent a loss of service.

If you would like to take advantage of this plan, please fill out the application below and mail it back to us. **And please let your designated third party know that you have named them.**

**You must provide your signature before returning the application.**

  
Customer's Signature

### BGE Third Party Notification Program Application

I, the undersigned, recognize that receipt of a copy of a turn-off notice by the Third Party does not place any obligation on that party to pay the BGE bill for the customer named below, nor will it necessarily stop turn-off if payment is not made. The notice simply reminds the Third Party of a chance to help the customer solve the problem related to non-payment.

Customer's Name (please print)	(Must be same as shown on the bill)	( ) -	Daytime Phone
Customer's Address (please print)	City	State	ZIP Code
Customer's Signature			
Third Party's Name (please print)	( ) -	Daytime Phone	
Third Party's Address (please print)	City	State	ZIP Code

*Baltimore City Health Department – Safety Tips for Pets*

Source: Baltimore City Health Department

**Please call 311 to report animals left outside in extreme weather.**

**Winter Safety Tips for Your Pet**

- **Keep your pets inside.** If your pet is outdoors during cold weather, they must be protected by a well-constructed, raised shelter that is dry and draft-free. Sufficient bedding and a door flap must be in place to maintain body heat.
- **Provide plenty of drinkable water.** Anytime your pet is outside, make sure he or she has plenty of fresh, unfrozen, drinkable water.
- **Increase Food.** Pets that spend a lot of time outdoors need more food in the winter because keeping warm depletes energy.
- **Watch for signs of frostbite.** Frostbite can be prevented by avoiding prolonged exposure to cold temperatures. It most commonly affects the tips of the ears, tail and paw pads.
- **Watch for signs of hypothermia.** Extremely cold temperatures can cause hypothermia. Signs include shivering, whining, difficulty breathing, not moving or weakness. If you believe your pet is suffering from hypothermia, take him or her to a veterinarian immediately.



### Red Cross Winter Preparedness Tips

Source: [Red Cross Winter Storm Safety Checklist](#)



**Be Red Cross Ready**  
Prepare so you can protect.

## Winter Storm

### Preparedness Checklist

Winter storms can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, sleet, heavy snowfall, ice, and high winds. These storms can cause transportation, heat, power, and communication disruptions. They also can close schools, stores, and workplaces. Winters are getting warmer and shorter because of climate change. But, because a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, heavier snowfalls are more likely to occur. We can take action to prepare. Prepare now to protect yourself, your loved ones, and your home.



### What to Do: Before



#### Plan to Stay Warm

- Stay warm indoors to prevent frostbite and hypothermia.
- Before the winter season begins, make sure you can heat your home safely. Prepare your home to keep out the cold with insulation, caulking, and weather stripping.
- Consider using an indoor thermometer or thermostat to monitor the temperature inside.
- Plan to check on loved ones and neighbors to make sure they are staying warm. This is especially important for older adults and babies.
- Drink plenty of warm fluids but avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Avoid travel if you can.
- If you must go outside, plan to dress properly. Keep your nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, and toes covered in warm, dry clothing. These areas are the first to be at risk for frostbite.
  - Wear layers of loose clothing, a coat, hat, mittens, and water-resistant boots. Use a scarf to cover your face and mouth.
- Know where you will go if your home becomes too cold. You could go to a friend's house, a public library, or a warming center.



#### Learn Emergency Skills

- Learn first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Emergency services may be delayed.
- Learn how to spot and treat frostbite and hypothermia.
- Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery back-ups.
- Be ready to live without power, gas, and water.
- Learn how to keep pipes from freezing.



#### Plan to Stay Connected

- Sign up for free emergency alerts from your local government.
- Plan to monitor local weather and news.
- Have a backup battery or a way to charge your cell phone.
- Have a battery-powered radio to use during a power outage.
- Understand the alerts you may receive.
  - A WATCH means **Be Prepared!**
  - A WARNING means **Take Action!**
- Create a support team to help everyone stay safe in a disaster. Plan how you can help each other.



#### Gather Emergency Supplies

- Gather food, water, and medicine before a winter storm. Stores might be closed, and it may be unsafe to travel.
- Organize supplies into a Go-Kit and a Stay-at-Home Kit.
  - Go-Kit: at least three days of supplies you can carry with you if you need to go somewhere else to stay warm. Include critical backup batteries and chargers for your devices (cell phone, CPAP, wheelchair, etc.).
  - Stay-at-Home Kit: at least two weeks of supplies.
- Ensure you have enough warm clothing, such as hats, mittens, and blankets, for everyone in your household.
- You may lose access to drinking water. Set aside at least one gallon of drinking water per person per day.
- Consider having emergency supplies in your vehicle, such as a blanket, warm clothing, a first aid kit, and boots.
- Have a 1-month supply of needed medications and medical supplies. Consider keeping a list of your medications and dosages on a small card to carry with you.
- Keep personal, financial, and medical records safe and easy to access (hard copies or securely backed up).
- Have a snow shovel and ice-melting products to keep your walkways safe.



## What to Do: During



### Stay Safe

- Use care with space heaters and fireplaces to prevent fires. Keep anything that could catch fire **at least 3 feet (1 meter) from the heat!**
- Avoid using candles because of the fire risk. Use battery-powered lights and flashlights instead.
- Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide poisoning is common during power outages when people use other means to heat and cook. You can prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
  - Only use generators, grills, and camp stoves outdoors and away from windows.
  - Carbon monoxide kills. If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak, **get to fresh air right away – do not delay.**
- To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning and home fires, never heat your home with a cooking oven or stove.



### Act Fast if You See Signs of Frostbite or Hypothermia

- **Frostbite** is when a part of your body freezes. Your nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, and toes often are the first affected. People may experience pain, numbness, and a change of skin color.
  - What to do for frostbite: Move to a warm place. Warm the affected area gently by soaking in warm water (NOT hot) until the skin appears normal and feels warm. Seek emergency medical care.
- **Hypothermia** can kill you. It occurs when your body loses heat faster than it can produce heat. This causes a dangerously low body temperature. Older adults, babies, children, and people with certain health conditions are more at risk.
  - Shivering is one of the first signs of hypothermia; other signs include confusion, drowsiness, and slurred speech.
  - What to do for hypothermia: Seek emergency medical care right away. Move to a warm place. Remove any wet clothing and warm the body slowly.

## What to Do: After



### Stay Safe

- If you need to go outside, use extreme caution when driving or walking on ice.
- Avoid damaged or fallen power lines. They can electrocute you.
- Be aware of branches, trees, and ice that may fall.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Take frequent breaks and, if possible, work with a partner.
- Use ice-melting products to keep your walkways safe.
- Go to a public library, shopping mall, or warming center if your home becomes too cold.



### Take Care of Yourself

- It's normal to have a lot of bad feelings, stress, or anxiety.
- Eat healthy food and get enough sleep to help you deal with stress.
- You can contact the Disaster Distress Helpline for free if you need to talk to someone. Call or text **1-800-985-5990**.

Prepare so you can protect.

| For more information, visit [redcross.org/prepare](https://redcross.org/prepare)

| Download the Emergency App



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Hazard and Protective Actions Icons are used courtesy of FEMA and are available at [community.fema.gov/ProtectiveActions/s/protective-actions-icons](https://community.fema.gov/ProtectiveActions/s/protective-actions-icons)

*Mayor's Office of Homeless Services Street Outreach Information Card:*

## **HOUSING IS THE GOAL!**

If you need  
**Emergency Shelter,**  
call **443-984-9540.**

If you'd like to learn  
more about housing  
options, reach out  
to a **Coordinated  
Access (CA)  
Navigator.**

## **CONTACT**



**410-545-1862 or 211**



**bit.ly/MOHSGetHelp**



**HomelessOutreach@  
baltimorecity.gov**

The mission of the Mayor's Office  
of Homeless Services (MOHS) is to  
make homelessness rare, brief, and  
nonrecurring in Baltimore City.

This guide includes primary resources  
for people who are currently  
experiencing homelessness. A  
comprehensive list of resources can  
be found on our website by typing  
the above web address or scanning  
the QR code below.



## **EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?**

## **FIND HELP NOW**



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF  
HOMELESS SERVICES

v2 3/2023

## HELP MEET YOUR DAILY NEEDS BY VISITING OUR LISTED PARTNERS.

## ARE YOU...

### HEALTH CARE

**Health Care for the Homeless (CA Navigator)**  
421 Fallsway  
410-837-5533

### TREATMENT

**People Encouraging People (CA Navigator)**  
4201 Primrose Avenue  
410-764-8560

### FOOD

**Franciscan Center**  
101 W. 23rd Street  
410-467-5340

**Our Daily Bread**  
725 Fallsway  
667-600-3400

**Beans and Bread (CA Navigator)**  
402 S. Bond Street  
410-732-1892

**Manna House** (Breakfast Only)  
435 E. 25th Street  
410-889-3001

**Paul's Place (CA Navigator)**  
1118 Ward Street  
410-625-0775

### A U.S. VETERAN?

**VA Community Resource and Referral Center**  
209 W. Fayette Street  
410-637-3246

### UNDER THE AGE OF 25?

**Springboard Youth Resource Center**  
4623 Falls Road  
410-995-7159

### A MEMBER OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY?

**Baltimore Safe Haven**  
2117 N. Charles Street  
443-869-6867



**Emergency/Crisis Support for Mental and Emotional Health: Call 988**

