



MAYOR DAVID J. NARKEWICZ

City of Northampton

Office of the Mayor

210 Main Street Room 12

Northampton, MA 01060-3199

(413) 587-1249 Fax: (413) 587-1275

mayor@northamptonma.gov

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City of Northampton to open Warming Center on Monday

After consultation with the City's emergency Management Team, Mayor David J. Narkewicz announced that the City of Northampton will be opening a warming center Monday, January 21, 2019, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Northampton Police Station Community Room located at 29 Center Street. The warming center is open to all members of the public and anyone who is in need of a warm place to be during this extreme cold and winter weather.

What you should do if the weather is extremely cold:

- Minimize outdoor activities for the whole family, including pets.
- Dress in several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing instead of a single heavy layer. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Wear a hat, mittens (not gloves), and sturdy waterproof boots to protect your extremities. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.
- Take recommended safety precautions when using space heaters, a fireplace, or a woodstove to heat your home. Keep a fire extinguisher handy.
- Make sure emergency generators or secondary heating systems are well ventilated.
- If you lose heating, move into a single room. Seal off unused areas by stuffing towels against the cracks under the doors, and at night, cover windows with extra blankets or sheets.
- Wrap pipes in insulation or layers of newspapers covered in plastic to prevent them from freezing. Let a trickle of warm water run from a faucet to keep water moving through your pipes.
- If your pipes freeze, remove any insulation, pour hot water over them or wrap them with towels soaked in hot water, and completely open all faucets. You can also use a hair dryer, with caution, to thaw pipes. Never use an open flame to thaw pipes.
- In the event of a power outage, you may need to take additional precautions or go to an emergency shelter to stay warm.
- Know the symptoms of and watch out for cold-related illnesses. Call 9-1-1 to report emergencies.
- Be a good neighbor. Check on family, friends, and neighbors, especially the elderly, those who live alone, those with medical conditions, and those who may need additional assistance.

Extreme cold is also concerning to fire officials, Fire Chief Duane Nichols, recommends the following during bouts of cold weather:

- Make sure smoke alarms and CO alarms are working.
- Keep thermostats set at the lowest comfortable temperature as furnaces may struggle to keep the house warm; wear warm clothes and put an extra blanket on the bed. If you run out of oil, or lose power, consider going to the home of a friend or relative who has heat rather than relying on alternative heating sources.

- When using a space heater make sure to keep a 3-foot circle of safety, free of anything that can catch fire. Space heaters are not designed to replace your central heating system, they are only designed to provide a little extra heat on a temporary basis. Be sure to turn them off when you leave room or go to bed at night.
- Space heaters and other heat-generating appliances should be plugged directly into the electrical outlet. Overloaded extension cords cause many space heater fires. If you must use an extension cord, make sure it is rated for the same wattage as the appliance and use only one.
- When burning wood or pellets make sure ashes are placed in a metal container with a lid away from the house, the garage, or the deck.
- Don't over fire your woodstove. An overtaxed woodstove can easily start a chimney fire taking advantage of creosote build-up or minor cracks in the flue or causing a breakdown in the chimney liner. Heating appliances are the leading cause of carbon monoxide in the home and the risk increases when they are working harder
- It's never too late to have a licensed professional clean and inspect your furnace or chimney. A professional can clean the chimney of creosote, and check for cracked or broken mortar. An efficiently running furnace is cheaper to run. Heating equipment is the leading cause of carbon monoxide in the home.
- The use of unvented space heaters that use a liquid fuel such as kerosene inside homes and buildings is illegal in Massachusetts. They pose an extreme risk of carbon monoxide poisoning as well as a fire risk.

For additional information on the Warming Center, or if you need assistance due to the extreme close, please contact Northampton Public Safety at 413-587-1100.

For more information on winter storm safety tips, please visit <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/winter-storm-safety-tips>

Helpful information is also available at www.northamptonma.gov/snow