

From: [PW, ARL Headquarters](#)
To: OLTL-ADULT-RESIDENTIAL-LICENSING@LISTSERV.DHS.PA.GOV
Subject: Extreme Winter Weather Forecast--Practice Safety
Date: Thursday, January 22, 2026 12:42:00 PM

Dear Providers,

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is expecting widespread severe winter weather, starting this Saturday, 1/24/2026 and continuing into early next week. Although local forecasts are still developing, there is a clear threat of potentially crippling snow, ice, and cold throughout large areas of the commonwealth. As you prepare for potential weather-related emergencies, please remember:

- Exposure to extreme cold can quickly lead to hypothermia, frostbite, and even death, especially in vulnerable populations.
 - Stay indoors whenever possible. Cancel or postpone outdoor activities or activities requiring travel.
- Exposure to extreme weather conditions may increase visits and calls to doctor's offices, visits to emergency departments and urgent care centers, and hospitalizations.
- Winter-weather related emergencies are compounded by increasingly hazardous travel conditions that may impact staffing and emergency response.
 - Equip vehicles with winter survival kits, including warm clothes, blankets, flashlights, and snacks. Be sure to inform others of travel plans.
- Fossil Fuel burning devices should be sufficiently ventilated and monitored closely to avoid carbon monoxide build-up and fire risk.
 - Outdoor power generators should be at least 20 feet from windows, doors, and vents and protected from rain and snow.

Populations served in Personal Care Homes and Assisted Living Residences face a much higher risk of adverse health events due to cold exposure.

Please be sure to review your Emergency Preparedness Plan and educate your staff on responses to weather related emergencies and resident elopements.

- If your buildings lose heating capacity due to power outages or other emergencies, resident relocation may become necessary.
 - Please be sure that your temporary relocation options are up-to-date and available.
 - Call 211 or visit the [Search | Pennsylvania 211](#) <https://search.pa211.org/> for more current and up to date information.

- Suggested best practices for elopement prevention and response:
 - Facilities should review their Emergency Preparedness Plan and educate staff.
 - Facilities should maintain adequate staffing levels and provide specialized training for staff on recognizing, managing, and responding to elopement risks.
 - Identify residents at high risk of elopement (e.g., those with dementia or a history of wandering) and tailor interventions accordingly.
 - Conduct frequent checks of residents' whereabouts and ensure all security devices are functioning correctly.
 - Conduct frequent checks of exits and entrances of the facility and the areas that lead from the exits and entrances.
 - Establish clear protocols for reporting and responding to elopement incidents, including notifying family, authorities, and relevant agencies.
 - Conduct Elopement Drills in facilities to prepare and educate all staff for the possibility of elopements in facilities.

- Suggested best practices for elopement response:
 - When a resident is found to be missing, immediately alert the appropriate contacts—this includes the resident's family, local authorities, and the resident's physician.
 - Organize a coordinated search involving staff, security, and law enforcement if needed, to help locate the resident quickly.
 - After the resident is found, make sure they receive a full medical assessment and any care they might need.
 - Review what happened to understand why the elopement occurred and put steps in place to help prevent it from happening again.
 - Keep comprehensive records of every elopement, documenting the actions taken to find the resident and any follow-up steps afterward.

- Additional Resources
 - [NWS StormReady® Program](#)
 - [Pennsylvania Weather Resources](#)
 - [Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency \(PEMA\)](#)
 - [CDC Winter Weather Safety Information](#)
 - <https://www.osha.gov/winter-weather>

Questions about this communication may be directed to [ra-](#)

pwarlheadquarters@pa.gov.

If your facility is experiencing a winter weather related emergency, please do not hesitate to [call your regional licensing office or BHSL headquarters](#).