

STATE OF CONNECTICUT SEVERE COLD WEATHER PROTOCOL

Winter 2025-2026

Activation triggers: National Weather Service forecast that includes watch or warning language indicating life-threatening temperatures or wind-chills OR sustained multi-day single digit or below zero temperatures or wind chill.

Initiating documentation:

1. Press Release with broad overview (possible recommendation to towns to open warming centers during the day);
2. Severe Cold Weather Alert to shelter providers from Department of Housing (DOH) and Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS);
3. Severe Cold Weather Alert from DOH/DEMHS/Department of Social Services (DSS) to DEMHS Regional Coordinators, Emergency Management Directors (EMDs), Police Chiefs, Fire Chiefs, Local First Responders.

All three of the above documents will describe, in varying degrees of detail, the following plan:

- Upon activation of the protocol, DEMHS will utilize and direct users to its **Daily Operations incident** in WebEOC, which will track WARMING CENTERS AND OVERFLOW OR TEMPORARY emergency shelters opened by towns.
- Through DEMHS Regional Coordinators, notify local EMDs to report on Web EOC if town opens a warming or overnight shelter.
- Through the DOH/DEMHS/DSS Severe Cold Weather Alerts described above, notify shelter operators and town officials, including first responders, to contact/advise client to contact 211 if in need of shelter. 211 staff will be available 24/7 during the duration of the activation.
- DOH and DEMHS coordinate with Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) to notify shelter operators of severe cold weather protocol and related issues.
- Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) will notify homeless outreach teams regarding issues related to sheltering/care for homeless mentally ill. Outreach teams may evaluate needs of clients.
- DSS will make arrangements with DSS contract transportation broker to provide transportation to shelter.
- DOH will authorize 211 to make hotel arrangements and to arrange transportation through ride share services as a last resort if a local Coordinated Access Network (CAN) is not able to accommodate that person or family.
- For those individuals who contact 211 needing shelter, 211 will work with CANs according to each CAN's specific protocol to ensure that all those in need secure appropriate shelter.
- If individual needs transportation, 211 will call DSS transportation broker to arrange ride to shelter or use ride share services as a last resort if time sensitive travel is required.
- If individual is in immediate medical danger, 911 will be called.
- In accordance with a system established in advance, each CAN will determine how and where to place those in need, including through hotel accommodations and/or transportation to hotel or another shelter, after referral from 211 or when a person or family presents at a shelter.
- DEMHS, DSS, DOH, DMHAS, United Way 211, and/or CCEH will hold phone conferences with partners as necessary to brief on protocol and specific preparations for a particular severe weather event.