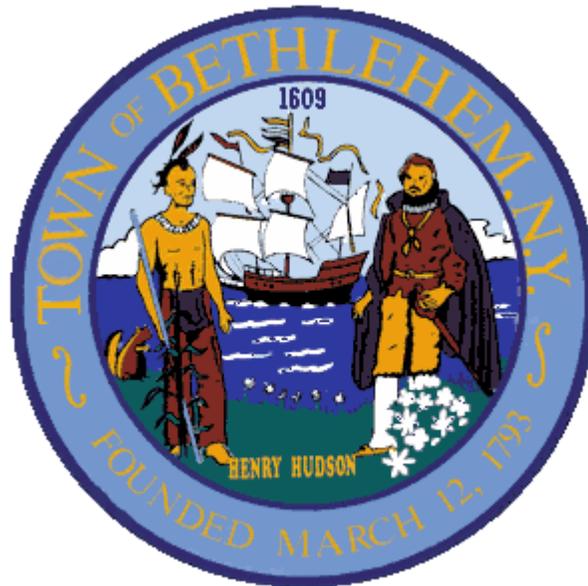


ANNEX #6

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



SEVERE WINTER STORM INFORMATION and RESPONSE PROCEDURES

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE
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December 2020

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM SEVERE WINTER STORM INFORMATION AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES

Introduction:

Extreme weather, be it overly hot or terribly cold impact the lives of our residents and the economic stability of the Town of Bethlehem. Severe winter storms and their affects have and will continue to bring problems to our residents and in particular to our “at-risk” community within the Town of Bethlehem. While we enjoy winter with its beauty and the many aspects of increased recreational events, this period of time during the year create problems and concerns for many of our residents, and can have a negative financial impact on commerce.

Severe winter storms over a prolonged period of time or exacerbated by power shortages or blackouts are a public health threat and directly impacts the possibilities of increased mortality and suffering. Groups within the Town of Bethlehem, who are older, very young, of lower income or have physical or mental impairments, are at an elevated risk during winter storms.

Since we have no ability to raise the temperature or to create a favorable weather change we must find ways to mitigate the impact to our residents. Today, these storm problems can often be accurately forecasted and a number of effective response measures are available that may assist the affected population. These procedures, in part, will assess the at-risk groups and recommend steps to alleviate and reduce the possible suffering attributed to the cold and winter snow experiences.

Impact:

The majority of the residents of the Town of Bethlehem will not be overly affected by winter storms, as may the more urban and/or rural communities. Our demographic dissimilarity with the larger urban cities and rural towns dramatically lowers the probability of widespread deaths and other medically associated results. However, the threat of death and severe medical consequences are still a matter of concern for our at-risk community. Winter storms are a fact of life in the Northeastern United States and most of us have become accustomed to snow, ice and their affects and have successfully lived through them for many years. However, when winter storms and their accompanying problems periodically visit us, there is a need for heightened alerts and response planning. Winter storms, by themselves, rarely create the situations that pose threats to our life and safety. It is the accompanying side affects of the storms that create the problems.

- Increased auto accidents
- Increased slips, falls and medical emergencies
- Increased fires
- Increased number of power outages
- Increased problems with lack of heat

The At-Risk Community:

Those individuals who may be affected by severe winter storms within the Town of Bethlehem do not differ greatly from those of our neighbors across the country.

- Frail persons
- Infants (age 1 and under)

- Homeless
- Low Income
- Socially isolated
- Mentally impaired
- Mobility restricted
- Individuals under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Those medically unfit involved in vigorous outdoor work

The Albany County Sheriff's Department, Office of Community and Emergency Services, through its voluntary enrollment **Special Needs Registry Program**, lists individuals within the Town of Bethlehem who may because of their age, frailty or other conditions are unable to evacuate themselves in the event of an emergency. The Town's Department of Senior Services has access to this information, and through additional sources attempts to monitor those identified residents, who may need assistance during periods of severe winter storms, or lack of power. Should the Seniors Department identify an individual(s) needing assistance they will take the necessary actions based on their in-place planning and policies. Should the individual(s) need emergency or other types of life-safety assistance or relief they should contact the Bethlehem Police Department or Bethlehem Office of Emergency Management, who will identify possible remedies and request necessary assistance from appropriate internal sources (Highway, DPW, etc.) or external agencies (fire service, etc.).

The National Grid has also established its **Life Support/Critical Care Program** to list and monitor those individuals who may need assistance during a time of crisis, such as a period of severe winter storm conditions, or prolonged power outages.

Information to register for one or both of the above programs can be found on the Town of Bethlehem website, at www.townofbethlehem.org and then going to the Emergency Management Office listed under the departments section, or by calling Town Hall, 439-4955, ext. 1166.

Goals:

1. Provide information on winter storms and potential problems to residents.
2. Identify the potential health impacts relevant to severe winter storm conditions.
3. Identify ways to mitigate, or alleviate, severe winter storm conditions and their impact on humans and animals.
4. Establish plans for notification and the response measures to be utilized for at risk citizens by the emergency response community.

Identifying Cold Weather Terms:

- Winter Storm Watch-Indicates severe winter weather may affect your area.
- Winter Storm Warning-Severe winter weather conditions will affect your area.
- Blizzard Warning-Large amount of falling or blowing snow with winds of at least 35 miles per hour expected to last for several hours.
- Wind Chill-The effect of wind speed in combination with the air temperature increases the rate of heat loss to the human body.
- Blackout-Equipment failure which occurs when the supply of power is cut, either by excessive demand on the power grid, lightning, storms, ice on power lines, equipment failure, or an accident which interrupts a normal power flow.

- Rolling Blackout-Occurs when electrical power is turned off to selected areas to save power. These blackouts usually occur during peak energy usage times, between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., but they can happen any time. Rolling blackouts may affect the same area more than once a day and they may exceed an hour's duration.

Identifying Extremely Cold Weather Characteristics:

1. Meteorological Characteristics:
 - Decreased temperatures
 - Heavy snow and/or icing
 - Cold winds and drifting snow
2. Demographic Characteristics
 - Physical-medical constraints
 - Mobility constraints
 - Economic constraints
 - Social isolation
3. Behavioral Choices
 - Inappropriate clothing
 - Alcohol consumption
4. Local Characteristics
 - Urban or Rural Environmental factors

All of the above characteristics may create situations or increase the possibility of health risks.

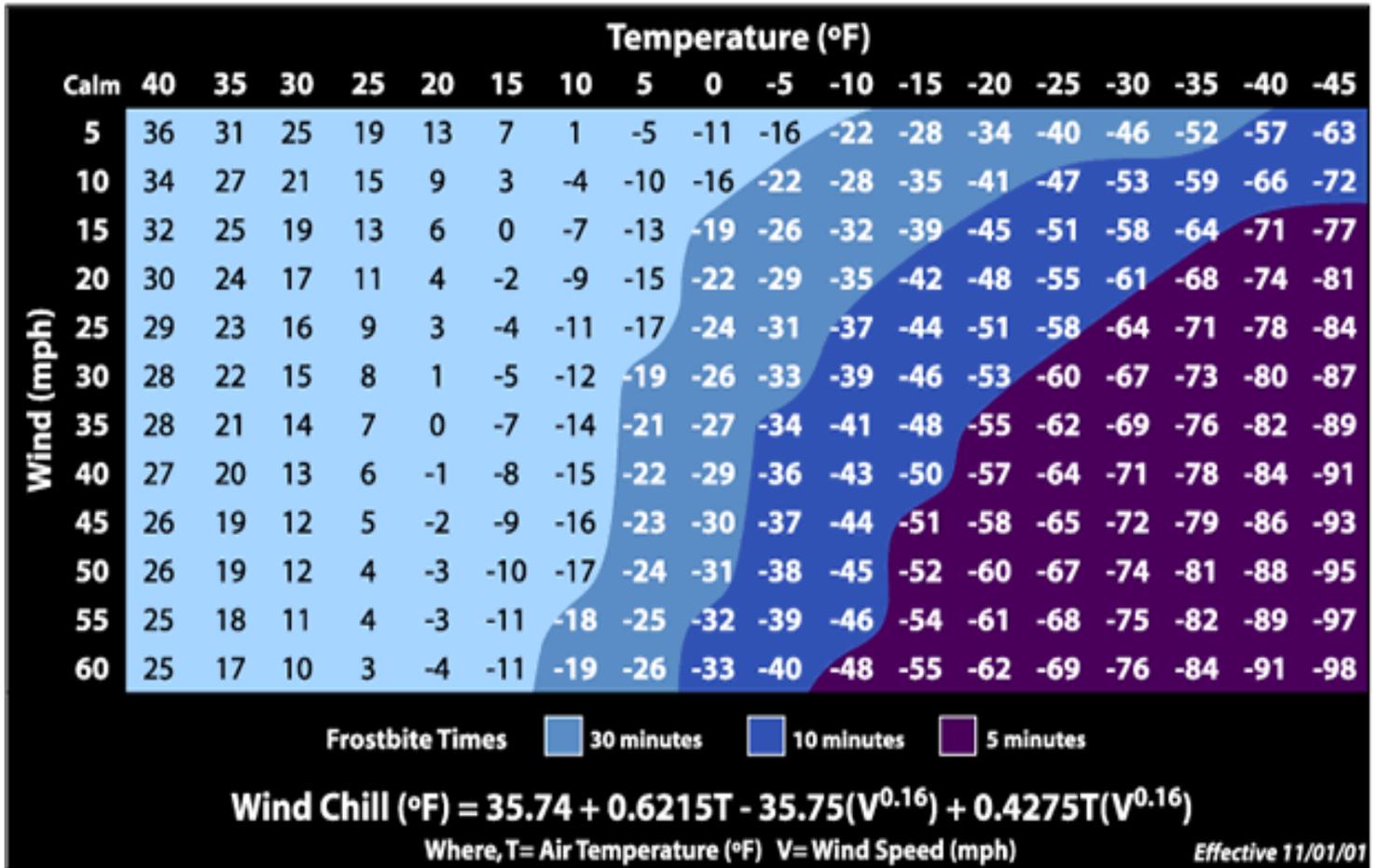
Identifying Medical Conditions Relative to Severe Winter Storm Conditions

Severe winter conditions and their resultant physical and medical conditions, as listed below, stress the body's ability to maintain ideal internal temperature. While the medical conditions identified are attributed to extensive exposures to cold weather, the impact on one's health could take many other forms and should not be underestimated. These medical conditions could cause, magnify, stress, or exacerbate pre-existing ailments and conditions.

1. Frostbite:
 - Severe reaction to cold exposure that can permanently damage its victims.
 - Symptoms include a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in fingers, toes, ears and nose.
 - If frostbite is suspected, slowly warm the victim and seek immediate medical assistance.
2. Hypothermia:
 - Occurs when the body's core temperature drops below normal
 - Symptoms include uncontrollable shivering, slow speech, memory lapses, frequent stumbling, and drowsiness.
 - If hypothermia is suspected, slowly warm the victim and seek immediate medical assistance.
3. Overexertion:
 - Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Shoveling snow, pushing a car, or other strenuous work may cause a heart attack.
 - Strenuous and unusually heavy lifting or pushing activities, particularly by seniors or those not normally use to this type of work can be dangerous. Slow down when working outdoors.



Wind Chill Chart



Above 25	Little danger for properly clothed person
25 to (-)70	Increasing danger; flesh may freeze
Below (-)70	Great danger; flesh may freeze in 30 seconds

Suggested Mitigation Methods

As noted previously, climate and meteorological aspects of this problem cannot be changed. There are some measures, both specific and general, that can be undertaken by the residents themselves, employers and Town government on behalf of residents. Those measures taken on behalf of the residents by Town government will be specified in the following section titled Planning Activities and Response Measures. The following are suggested measures that should be reviewed by those individuals that may be at-risk during times of extremely cold temperatures and large accumulations of snow or blowing snow.

- Monitor weather forecasts and bulletins.
- Register with Special Needs Program, if eligible.
- Stay in contact with family and friends.
- Make sure that heating appliances have been serviced and usable for safe long-term operation.
- Service and safely use snow removal equipment.
- Have adequate food stocks on hand.
- If using fuel oil, maintain an adequate supply.
- Have safe, emergency heating equipment available, and use only according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Have an Emergency Plan for evacuation.
- Assemble a "Go Kit" based of essential materials and documents.
- Winterize your home.
- Drink lots of water and stay hydrated.
- Install, and check regularly, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Go to public buildings or designated warming locations, if needed.
- Protect water pipes from freezing.
- Wear appropriate warm clothing, both indoors and out.
- Prepare a Safety Checklist.
- Have adequate winter and emergency supplies on hand.
- Do not leave small children, incapacitated seniors, or at-risk individuals unattended.
- Do not leave any of the above or animals alone in parked running vehicles.
- Check on your neighbors and relatives, particularly those at-risk individuals.
- Feed and water your pets regularly.
- If traveling, maintain winter car emergency supplies.

For information concerning any of the above items, and in particular; Safety Checklist, Special Needs Program and a Family Emergency Plan, contact the Town of Bethlehem Emergency Management Office.

Determining Levels of Severe Winter Storm Impact:

Low Level- Extended cold and freezing weather with light to medium snowfall and accumulation. Winter storm watch and warnings in effect.

Medium Level- Extended cold and freezing weather with moderate to heavy snowfall, drifting and heavy accumulations. Blizzard warnings in effect. Minimal and sporadic loss of power

High Level- Continued blizzard conditions with excessive freezing weather and wind chill factors. Continued heavy snowfall and drifting with forecasts of future heavy snowfall, accompanied by power outages and road closures.

Planning Activities and Response Measures

In an effort to assist the residents of the Town of Bethlehem, and in particular to aid those at-risk individuals, during periods of extreme winter storm conditions, the Town of Bethlehem government, personnel and associated response agencies will undertake the following measures based on the three levels of severity of a Winter Storm Event:

Severe Winter Storm Event-LOW LEVEL:

- Monitor forecasts and maintain weather watch
- Provide public information and education
- Canvas at-risk population
- Update “at-risk” individual’s information
- Consider upgrade to Medium Level

Severe Winter Storm Event-MEDIUM LEVEL

- All Low Level actions
- Supervisor meets with department heads and response agencies on possible strategy
- Daily contacts with at-risk group
- Establish Town of Bethlehem **Winter Storm Hot Line**, if needed
- Publish regular press statements
- Encourage increased use of Town Hall by the at-risk community as warming center, if needed.
- Suggest rescheduling or cancellation of local public events
- Maintain contacts with emergency responder groups
- Review Town Departments plans for snow emergencies
- Distribute “stay warm” information to at-risk and public.
- Request public assistance with hydrant clearings, if needed.
- Request expertise and advice from Town Medical Advisor.
- Increase outreach services to other than identified at-risk
- Consider upgrade to **High Level**

Severe Winter Storm Event-HIGH LEVEL

- All Low and Medium Level actions
- Contact volunteer care groups for possible assistance
- Assign volunteers, if available, to each of the at-risk individuals
- Institute regular Public Information Officer (PIO) briefings
- Put into effect a plan for prioritized plowing and road clearing for emergency responder access
- Initiate employee call backs, if needed
- Individual Town Departmental Emergency Plans are initiated
- Establish additional warming centers at designated locations.
- Transfer at-risk individuals to warming centers, hospitals, or other safe locations, if needed
- Put various information and alerting methods into effect such as media alerts and Reverse 9-1-1.
- Maintain snow load watch on buildings of public assembly
- Request increased EMS and other emergency response staffing

- Request assistance for transportation to warming centers
- Request assistance for snow or debris clearing for homebound and “at risk” residents
- Suggest rescheduling or cancellation of local public events
- Request assistance from sheltering community and volunteers
- Request suspension of utility cutoffs
- Supervisor convenes Strategy Board
- Supervisor considers Declaration of Emergency
- Supervisor issues Emergency Orders, if necessary

Special considerations will be taken by Town of Bethlehem department managers and supervisory personnel to assure that employees and constituents remain safe, warm and are protected from the possible effects of the severe cold weather. Each Town Department, serving the critical needs of our residents, should have in place a plan for emergency procedures should severe winter weather; snow and possible loss of power disrupt the needed continuity of government.

The specific Town of Bethlehem Departments having any of the above particular enumerated duties within their normal sphere of authority and responsibility will perform those actions and tasks as needed. The coordination of the various actions, noted above, and those items not falling within any particular department’s scope of operation will be the responsibility of the Director, Emergency Management Office or as designated by the Supervisor.

Certain powers are extended to law enforcement regarding the homeless under Section 9.41 of the Mental Health Law, and additionally under other relevant sections of Social Services Law when temperatures are at or below 32 degrees, including wind-chill. Police agencies are authorized and mandated to assess the competency of homeless individuals to seek shelter and to, if not competent, to transport the individual(s) to shelter, voluntarily or involuntarily.

Additions, deletions, changes or modifications to these procedures will be made as deemed necessary and shall be reviewed and updated on a regular basis by the Supervisor and Director, Emergency Management Office.

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12/2020