



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Staying Warm and Safe this Winter

The darker days of winter can be an opportunity for rest and renewal. This could mean cozying up inside with our families or spending time outdoors taking walks in the snow, engaging in winter sports and connecting with the land.

When temperatures are colder than what you are used to, here are a few recommendations to help Elders, children, families, and communities stay well and warm during the winter season!

Staying warm in your home

In addition to wood stoves and central heating, consider having space heaters in certain rooms to maximize heat where you spend most of your time indoors. Ensure placement of space heaters in safe locations away from walls or furniture which may pose a fire hazard. Close doors to any unused rooms to conserve heat and try to reduce drafts under doorways or around windows. During the day, opening blinds with the windows closed can allow in radiant heat from the sun, while closing the blinds again at night will conserve heat. If you have a ceiling fan, turn it to the lowest setting to distribute the warm air as it rises.

Dress Smart

Dress in layers and watch for signs of frostbite or hypothermia, such as shivering, confusion, and drowsiness; if symptoms occur, seek medical assistance immediately. Be cautious when walking not to slip on ice and use salt to melt walkways around your house. Take vigorous activities like snow shoveling at a moderate to slow pace, taking breaks. In extreme cold, consider staying indoors if possible.

Preparing for extreme cold

Prepare an [emergency kit](#) to keep in your home and one for your vehicle that may also include salt, sand and snow shovels. Prepare your vehicle for the cold with regular maintenance and winter tires. Develop an emergency plan. Watch for [extreme weather alerts](#) for your area.

Providing shelter and warmth in your community

Your community may wish to establish a warming centre during extreme weather events. Centres may provide hot drinks and snacks, and if possible items like gloves, toques or blankets. Warming centres can also provide information and resources. Communities may be reimbursed for costs to establish warming centres, including facility rental and fuel costs. See page two of this document for more details.

If you or someone you know are in need of shelter and warmth:

To find a warming centre, visit: [Extreme Cold & Warming Centres: Multiple Communities in BC. Nov. 30, 2022. | EmergencyInfoBC \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

To see a map of all permanent, temporary and Extreme Weather Response shelters throughout communities in B.C., visit: <https://smap.bchousing.org/>. To learn about the Province's emergency shelter program, visit: <https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/homelessness-services/emergency-shelter-program>

Establishing a Community Warming Centre

The below guidance is based on information received from Emergency Management BC on what Warming Centre supports are available to First Nations Communities and Local Governments.

For the purposes of these guidelines, the definition of "extreme weather conditions" as listed in the [Assistance to Shelter Regulation](#), are outlined below:

(a) any of the following conditions are prescribed for the Fraser Region, the Vancouver Coastal Region and the Vancouver Island Region:

- (i) Environment Canada is forecasting, for the next 24-hour period, a temperature of -4° Celsius or lower as the lowest temperature for that period;
- (ii) according to Environment Canada, the temperature currently is -4° Celsius or lower;
- (iii) Environment Canada, for the next 24-hour period, is forecasting a temperature of 0° Celsius or lower as the lowest temperature for that period and has issued a weather warning;
- (iv) according to Environment Canada the temperature currently is 0° Celsius or lower and Environment Canada has issued a weather warning, and

(b) any of the following conditions are prescribed for the Interior Region and the North Region:

- (i) Environment Canada is forecasting, for the next 24-hour period, a temperature of -10° Celsius or lower as the lowest temperature for that period;
- (ii) according to Environment Canada, the temperature currently is -10° Celsius or lower;
- (iii) Environment Canada, for the next 24-hour period, is forecasting a temperature of 0° Celsius or lower as the lowest temperature for that period and has issued a weather warning;
- (iv) according to Environment Canada, the temperature currently is 0° Celsius or lower and Environment Canada has issued a weather warning.

Reception / Warming Centres:

Warming Centres may be established when extreme weather conditions as listed in the Assistance to Shelter Regulation exist. A task # may be authorized to ensure the health or safety of vulnerable individuals or families and to provide coverage for volunteers.

A warming centre is a place for people to go to warm up and get information on how to safely stay warm in their own homes.

Fuel and operating costs for generators for First Nations or Local Government-owned-or-run facilities may be eligible.

Rental costs for non- First Nations or Local Government owned-or-run facilities may be eligible.

Note: Fuel for privately owned generators, for use at a private residence is not an eligible expense.